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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes findings from two national surveys of U.S. civics achievement conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Part 1 reports on a trend assessment of approximately 56,000 students at ages 13 and 17, carried out during the 1975-76, 1981-82, and 1987-88 school years. Chapter 1 summarizes national trends, trends for demographic subpopulations, trends in students' ability to define democracy, and trends in students' ability to identify the value of multiple newspaper publishers. Part 2 reports on patterns of achievement of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students in 1988. Chapter 2 summarizes the levels of civics proficiency across the grades. Chapter 3 compares civics proficiency across subpopulations defined by gender, race/ethnicity, region, and other characteristics. Chapter 4 explores students' performance in specific content areas such as: democratic principles and the purpose of government; political processes; and rights, responsibilities, and the law. Chapter 5 describes the amount of instruction students reported receiving in civics, while chapter 6 discusses the topics studied and the instructional approaches used in these classes. Appendices contain procedural information and tables of statistical data that supplement the information in the text. (JB)

ED315376

# The Civics Report Card

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

TRENDS IN ACHIEVEMENT FROM 1976 TO 1988 AT AGES 13 AND 17 • ACHIEVEMENT IN 1988 AT GRADES 4, 8 AND 12

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NAEP is a congressionally mandated project of the National Center for Education Statistics, the U.S. Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible, by law, for carrying out the NAEP project through competitive awards to qualified organizations. NAEP reports directly to the Commissioner, who is also responsible for providing continuing reviews, including validation studies and solicitation of public comment, on NAEP's conduct and usefulness.

In 1988, Congress created the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) to formulate policy guidelines for NAEP. The board is responsible for selecting the subject areas to be assessed, which may include adding to those specified by Congress; identifying appropriate achievement goals for each age and grade; developing assessment objectives; developing test specifications; designing the assessment methodology; developing guidelines and standards for data analysis and for reporting and disseminating results; developing standards and procedures for interstate, regional, and national comparisons; improving the form and use of the National Assessment; and ensuring that all items selected for use in the National Assessment are free from racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias.

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THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

# The Civics Report Card

TRENDS IN ACHIEVEMENT FROM 1976 TO 1988 AT AGES 13 AND 17 • ACHIEVEMENT IN 1988 AT GRADES 4, 8, AND 12

Lee Anderson • Lynn B. Jenkins
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*Knowledge will forever*
*govern ignorance; and a*
*people who mean to be*
*their own governors must*
*arm themselves with*
*the power knowledge gives.*

*James Madison, 1822*

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## OVERVIEW

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION in government was essential in forming this nation's democracy and is no less vital in sustaining it. Civic education helps prepare students to participate intelligently in public affairs by giving them the understandings they need to make sense of civic issues. By studying the intricate structure of American government and politics, students can learn how to contribute to national, state, and local decision making. More broadly, civic education helps students appreciate the principles, such as individual liberty, justice, tolerance, equality, and responsibility, that are central to American democracy and are constantly being challenged in modern society.

This report from The Nation's Report Card summarizes findings from two surveys of U.S. civics achievement conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The first is a trend assessment of American students at ages 13 and 17, carried out during the 1975-76, 1981-82, and 1987-88 school years. (These assessments will subsequently be referred to by the last half of the school year in which they occurred — thus, as the 1976, 1982, and 1988 assessments.) The second is an assessment of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students, conducted in 1988.

Together, the results of these assessments offer a chance to reflect on students' civic understanding and on areas of growth and decline in their proficiency — an undertaking that is particularly timely because the 1988 assessments coincided with the bicentennial of the writing of the United States Constitution. Combined with information from other sources, this report provides an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which our nation is providing all students with the kinds of civic learning needed to understand the significance of that historic document and the principles embedded within it.

## Highlights from the NAEP Civics Trend Assessments, 1976 to 1988: Ages 13 and 17

The NAEP civics trend assessments involved nationally representative samples of approximately 56,000 students at ages 13 and 17. In these assessments, questions that had been administered to students in 1976 and 1982 were readministered to comparable samples of students in 1988. The performance results for all three years were analyzed using statistical methods based on item response theory (IRT), and then translated to a common scale ranging from 0 to 100.

The results of the trend assessments indicate that some groups of students made gains in civics proficiency across the 12-year period, but most did not.

- The average civics proficiency of 13-year-olds assessed in 1988 was equivalent to, if not slightly higher than, that of their counterparts assessed in 1976 and 1982.

- Seventeen-year-olds participating in the most recent assessment tended to perform significantly less well than their counterparts in the earlier assessments.

- The performance gap between White students and their Black and Hispanic counterparts was narrowed across time at both age levels. At age 13, this was a result of significant gains in civics achievement made by Black and Hispanic students; at age 17, it was due to a decline in the achievement of White students.

- At age 13, the performance of students attending schools in advantaged urban communities appeared to decline somewhat across time, although the change was not statistically significant. At age 17, the performance of students attending schools in each of the types of communities studied — advantaged urban, disadvantaged urban, and other — declined significantly.

- The performance of 13-year-old males remained relatively constant across time, while the performance of females at this age level improved significantly from 1982 to 1988. The average civics proficiency of male and female 17-year-olds declined significantly from 1976 to 1988.

- Thirteen-year-olds in all four regions performed as well in 1988 as their counterparts had in the earlier assessments. At age 17, there were slight declines in achievement across time for students in the Northeast and Central regions and significant declines for students in the West.

- In both the 1976 and 1988 assessments, a majority of the 17-year-old students (84 to 88 percent) wrote brief definitions of democracy that were considered acceptable.

## Highlights from the 1988 NAEP Civics Assessment: Grades 4, 8, and 12

The 1988 NAEP civics assessment at grades 4, 8, and 12 involved approximately 11,000 students from 1,000 public and private schools across the country. The results provide detailed information on students' knowledge and understandings in this subject area and permit comparisons of performance across the grades and across subpopulations defined by demographic, school, and home characteristics. Each participating student answered a series of questions designed to measure his or her knowledge and understanding of various aspects of United States government and politics. Background questions were also asked in order to gather information on students' individual, home, and school characteristics that could be linked with information on their civics proficiency.

The results from the 1988 NAEP civics assessment were analyzed using item response theory (IRT) methods, permitting comparisons of performance across the grades and subpopulations on a common proficiency scale, ranging from 0 to 500. Four levels of proficiency on the scale were defined:

- Level 200: Recognizes the Existence of Civic Life
- Level 250: Understands the Nature of Political Institutions and the Relationship Between Citizen and Government
- Level 300: Understands Specific Government Structures and Functions
- Level 350: Understands a Variety of Political Institutions and Processes

The knowledge, skills, and understandings represented at each level were articulated by a panel of consultants, based on the types of items answered correctly by the students performing at each level. (More detailed information on the civics proficiency scale can be found in the Procedural Appendix.)

### Performance Results

- Almost three-quarters of the fourth-grade students (71 percent) demonstrated a basic awareness of political vocabulary, institutions, and processes.

- By grade 8, 61 percent of the students had reached a level of civics proficiency that was characterized by a knowledge of the nature of political institutions and the relationship between citizen and government.

- Half the twelfth-grade students displayed a detailed knowledge of major government structures and their functions, while just 6 percent demonstrated a more developed understanding of a wide range of political institutions and processes.

- Eighth- and twelfth-grade males were more likely than their female peers to reach the highest levels of civics proficiency defined by NAEP.

- At grade 4, there were large differences in the percentages of White students and either Black or Hispanic students who attained each level of civics proficiency. More than three-quarters of the White fourth graders reached the lowest level of proficiency defined by NAEP, compared with approximately half the Black and approximately half the Hispanic students. By the twelfth grade, the percentages of Black and Hispanic students who reached the uppermost levels of proficiency were far smaller than the percentage of White students who did.

- Students attending schools in advantaged urban communities were far more likely than those in disadvantaged urban communities to achieve each level of civics proficiency defined.

- There were only slight differences in achievement across the regions, and the small gaps that were evident did not consistently favor one region over the others.

- At grades 4, 8, and 12, students' civics proficiency was positively related to the amount of instruction they reported they had received in social studies, civics, or U.S. government.

- Most students in the upper grades — 89 percent of the eighth graders and 94 percent of the twelfth graders — correctly identified Ronald Reagan as president at the time of the assessment. However, they appeared to find it difficult to describe the president's responsibilities in writing. Only 7 percent of the eighth graders and 19 percent of the twelfth graders wrote well-developed responses to a question on this topic.

### Instructional Findings

- Eighty-nine percent of the eighth graders reported they had studied American government or civics since grade 5, and 93 percent of the twelfth graders reported they had taken a course in this subject area in high school.

- Fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders reported studying a variety of civics topics. In the fourth grade, topics such as the community, presidents, laws, and citizens' rights and responsibilities were most commonly emphasized. Most students in the upper grades reported studying the Constitution, while many also reported studying the Congress, the way in which laws are made, the president and cabinet, and political parties.

■ Across the grades, students who had studied the civics topics covered in the assessment to at least some extent demonstrated higher proficiency, on average, than their peers who reported not studying these topics.

■ At all three grades, a vast majority of the students reported that reading from a textbook was an instructional method commonly used by their social studies teachers.

It is clear that students' civic understandings increase as they move through the grades, so that by the time they approach high-school graduation, many are familiar with some of the basic institutions, facts, and principles that are the core of American political culture. However, the gaps in students' civic knowledge and the disparities in achievement among subpopulations raise serious concerns.

### A Note on Interpretations

The Nation's Report Card presents information on the performance of groups of students, not individuals. The measures of achievement included in this report are students' average civics achievement on the NAEP proficiency scale, the percentages of students attaining successive levels of achievement on that scale, and the percentages of students who responded correctly to particular items or sets of items.

Because the achievement data reported here are based on samples, they are necessarily estimates. Like all estimates based on surveys, they are subject to sampling error as well as measurement error. NAEP uses a complex procedure to compute standard errors that estimate the sampling error and other random error associated with the observed assessment results. The standard errors were used to construct the 95 percent confidence intervals presented in the figures. This report adheres to a standard convention whereby trend differences are identified as significant (noted with an asterisk) only when they are at least twice as large as the sum of the standard errors of the values being compared. Such differences are described in this report as "significant" in the statistical sense.

It is important, however, to distinguish *statistical* significance from *educational* significance. Some statistically significant differences may not merit educational concern, while other patterns of results that are not statistically significant may be of great educational importance. Readers must therefore use their own knowledge and experience to decide for themselves how important particular changes or differences are in the real world, because statistical conventions can aid, but not replace, good judgment.

PART ONE

# Trends in Achievement at Ages 13 and 17, 1976 to 1988

CHAPTER ONE

# Trends in Civics Proficiency

IN 1988, NAEP conducted the first civics assessment it designed specifically to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of United States government and politics. In previous years, though, it had assessed students' proficiency in the overlapping area of citizenship/social studies. Some of the trend items administered at ages 13 and 17 in 1976 and 1982 were judged to be appropriate measures of civic understanding, and these were readministered in 1988 to samples of 13- and 17-year-old students following procedures identical to those used in the earlier assessments. This allowed NAEP to examine changes across time in the civic knowledge and understandings of 13- and 17-year-olds, in addition to measuring the proficiency of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders using new assessment materials.

The items included in the civics trend assessments covered a variety of topics, including the structures and functions of particular institutions, the responsibilities of different levels of government, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Most of the questions were in multiple-choice format, but a few open-ended questions were also included. These asked students to provide brief written responses to questions on selected issues and topics.

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The results from the assessments were analyzed using item response theory (IRT) technology, allowing the performance data to be reported on a single proficiency scale, ranging from 0 to 100.[1] In this chapter, the trend proficiency

[1] The range for the trend scale (0 to 100) is different from the range for the cross-sectional scale (0 to 500), discussed in Part II, so as to avoid confusion between the two sets of performance results.

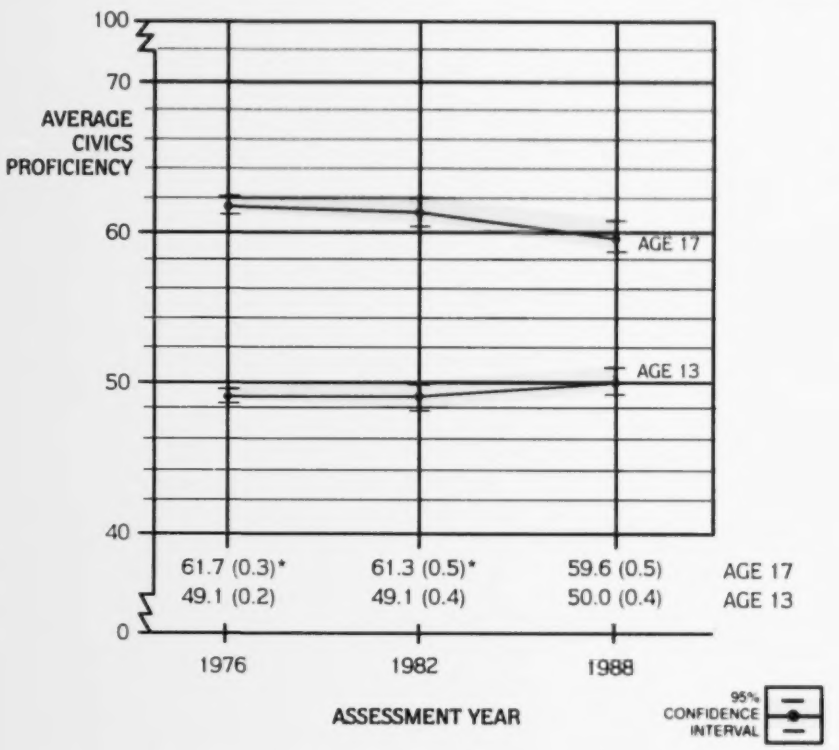
scale is used as the basis for examining changes across time in the proficiency of 13- and 17-year-old students. In addition to the national results, performance trends are compared for students belonging to different subpopulations of interest — for example, populations defined by students' demographic, home, and school-related characteristics.

## National Trends

Seventeen-year-olds participating in the 1988 assessment performed significantly less well than their counterparts assessed in either 1976 or 1982, while 13-year-olds assessed in 1988 tended to perform as well as — if not better than — their predecessors (FIGURE 1.1).

FIGURE 1.1 Trends in Average Civics Proficiency at Ages 13 and 17 1976 to 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD




*Shows statistically significant difference from 1988 at the .05 level. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

### Trends for Demographic Subpopulations

A comparison of trends in civics proficiency for particular subgroups of the population helps to identify the groups that contributed most to the changes observed at the national level. (More detailed information on these subpopulations is provided in the Procedural Appendix.)

### Race/Ethnicity

TABLE 1.1 compares trends in average civics proficiency for 13- and 17-year-olds belonging to three racial/ethnic subpopulations studied by NAEP: White, Black, and Hispanic students.

From 1976 to 1988, the average civics proficiency of White 13-year-olds remained constant while the proficiency of Black and Hispanic students at this age improved significantly. A very different pattern is evident at age 17, where the only statistically significant change for any of the racial/ethnic subpopulations examined was a decline in the average civics achievement of White students. The performance of Black 17-year-olds remained constant across the 12-year period, while the performance of Hispanic students at this age level improved slightly.

White students tended to perform better than Black or Hispanic students at both ages and in all three assessment years; however, the progress made by Black and Hispanic 13-year-olds served to lessen the gap at that age level, and the

TABLE 1.1

## Trends in Average Civics Proficiency by Race/Ethnicity, 1976 to 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1976 | 1982 | 1988 |
| **AGE 13** | | | |
| White | 50.7 (0.2) | 50.7 (0.3) | 51.2 (0.5) |
| Black | 42.1 (0.3)* | 42.0 (0.4)* | 45.7 (0.6) |
| Hispanic | 41.1 (0.6)* | 43.9 (0.5) | 45.5 (1.8) |
| **AGE 17** | | | |
| White | 63.4 (0.3)* | 63.6 (0.4)* | 61.4 (0.6) |
| Black | 52.5 (0.5) | 51.6 (0.5) | 53.1 (1.0) |
| Hispanic | 51.5 (0.8) | 52.3 (1.2) | 53.8 (1.7) |

* Shows statistically significant difference from 1988 at the .05 level. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

decline in achievement of White students served to reduce the gap between White and minority students at age 17. Still, the performance gap between White and Black students — and between White and Hispanic students — remained larger at age 17 than at age 13.

### Size and Type of Community

TABLE 1.2 compares trends in average civics proficiency for 13- and 17-year-olds attending schools in different types of communities.

Although the change was not statistically significant, the performance of 13-year-old students attending schools in advantaged urban communities appeared to decline somewhat across time. The performance of the other community groups at this age level remained relatively constant. At age 17, a different pattern was evident. Students attending schools in advantaged urban communities initially showed performance gains, but these were followed by declines between 1982 and 1988, so that their average performance declined significantly from first assessment to the last. The performance of students attending schools in disadvantaged urban communities and other types of communities also declined significantly across time.

TABLE 1.2

## Trends in Average Civics Proficiency by Size and Type of Community, 1976 to 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1976 | 1982 | 1988 |
| **AGE 13** | | | |
| Advantaged Urban | 55.0 (0.5) | 54.9 (0.6) | 52.6 (1.5) |
| Disadvantaged Urban | 44.0 (0.9) | 43.9 (1.1) | 43.8 (0.9) |
| Other | 48.6 (0.2) | 49.1 (0.3) | 50.0 (0.6) |
| **AGE 17** | | | |
| Advantaged Urban | 66.1 (0.8)* | 69.4 (0.7)* | 62.3 (0.9) |
| Disadvantaged Urban | 56.3 (1.1)* | 52.7 (0.8) | 50.0 (2.2) |
| Other | 61.7 (0.2)* | 61.6 (0.5)* | 59.2 (0.6) |

* Shows statistically significant difference from 1988 at the .05 level. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

### Gender

Trends in the civics proficiency of males and females at each age level are presented in TABLE 1.3.

The performance of 13-year-old males assessed in 1988 was equivalent to that of their counterparts assessed in 1976, while the performance of 13-year-old females improved significantly from 1982 to 1988. At age 17, both males and females participating in the most recent assessment performed less well than their counterparts assessed 12 years earlier.

### Region

TABLE 1.4 compares trends in average civics achievement across the four regions of the country defined by The Nation's Report Card: the Northeast, Central, Southeast, and West.[2]

On average, the proficiency of 13-year-old students in each of the four regions remained relatively stable over the 12-year period, although students in the Northeast, Southeast, and West showed some evidence of improvement. The performance of 17-year-olds from the Northeast and Central regions dropped slightly, but the only significant change for any region at that age level was a decrease in average civics proficiency in the West from 1976 to 1988. Across the years, there were differences in average proficiency between the highest and lowest performing regions at both age levels, but these differences were not large.

TABLE 1.3 **Trends in Average Civics Proficiency by Gender, 1976 to 1988**

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1976 | 1982 | 1988 |
| **AGE 13** | | | |
| Male | 49.7 (0.2) | 50.1 (0.4) | 50.5 (0.6) |
| Female | 48.5 (0.3) | 48.2 (0.4)* | 49.5 (0.4) |
| **AGE 17** | | | |
| Male | 63.5 (0.3)* | 63.1 (0.6) | 61.2 (0.7) |
| Female | 60.0 (0.3)* | 59.6 (0.5) | 58.2 (0.6) |

* Shows statistically significant difference from 1988 at the .05 level. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

[2] The states included in each region are identified in the Procedural Appendix.

TABLE 1.4

## Trends in Average Civics Proficiency by Region, 1976 to 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1976 | 1982 | 1988 |
| **AGE 13** | | | |
| Northeast | 50.1 (0.4) | 51.2 (0.7) | 51.2 (0.6) |
| Southeast | 47.3 (0.6) | 47.2 (0.6) | 49.7 (1.4) |
| Central | 50.9 (0.4) | 49.3 (0.8) | 50.3 (0.8) |
| West | 47.7 (0.5) | 48.6 (0.6) | 48.9 (0.9) |
| **AGE 17** | | | |
| Northeast | 62.9 (0.5) | 62.3 (0.9) | 60.8 (1.2) |
| Southeast | 59.3 (0.4) | 59.8 (1.0) | 59.7 (0.7) |
| Central | 62.3 (0.4) | 62.8 (0.7) | 60.1 (1.4) |
| West | 61.7 (0.6)* | 60.1 (1.0) | 58.1 (1.1) |

* Shows statistically significant difference from 1988 at the .05 level. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

**In both 1976 and 1988, a vast majority of the 17-year-olds gave acceptable definitions of democracy. Most defined democracy primarily in terms of popular sovereignty, majority rule, or equality.**

## Trends in Students' Ability to Define Democracy

As previously noted, the civics trend assessments included two open-ended items that asked students to provide brief written discussions on civic issues. In the first of the open-ended items, given only at age 17, students were asked to briefly define the term "democracy" as it applied to the United States government. Their responses were evaluated using guidelines that defined criteria for acceptable and unacceptable responses. A condensed definition of the scoring guidelines and the percentages of papers rated in each category are presented in TABLE 1.5.

TABLE 1.5 Trends in 17-Year-Olds' Performance on the "Democracy" Task, 1976 to 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| DEFINITION | 1976 | 1988 |
| **Acceptable Responses** | | |
| Refers to sovereignty of the people, majority rule, voting, government by representation, equality | 78.7 (2.0) | 80.7 (1.9) |
| Refers to specific Constitutional rights, Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights | 5.3 (0.7) | 6.4 (0.8) |
| Other acceptable responses | 0.3 (0.3) | 1.3 (0.4) |
| **Total** | 84.3 (1.9) | 88.4 (1.8) |
| **Unacceptable Responses** | 15.7 (1.1)* | 11.6 (1.0) |

* Shows statistically significant difference from 1988 at the .05 level. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

In both 1976 and 1988, a vast majority of the 17-year-olds (84 to 88 percent) gave acceptable definitions of democracy. Most (79 percent in 1976 and 81 percent in 1988) defined democracy primarily in terms of popular sovereignty, majority rule, or equality. The following are examples of this type of response.[3]

*Democracy is a government in which the people of the country (the public) vote and elect people who will govern the country, make and enforce laws and work for the people. It is a nation by the people and for the people. No leaders are permanent but change as the people change for they are the people. In a democracy, no one has complete power and the people are free to do as they please within the requirements of laws. There is a system of balances and checks.*

*Democracy is that the people have the power. They have freedoms that are protected by the Constitution. Democracy is that the people vote and it is very liberal. A Democracy includes any type of race or groups into it's country. It is not bais against anyone.*

*A democracy is when the citizens of a country have a say in what officials are elected to office. Also citizens can participate in government. Democracy is also when people have the rights of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. In a democracy the government is not a dictatorship, it is run by the people and for the people.*

*A democracy is a form of government when the people have a right to vote and make decisions. When the government doesn't have all the power.*

A far smaller percentage of the students (approximately 5 to 6 percent in each year) associated democracy with the specific content of documents such as the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, or Bill of Rights. The following are examples of such responses.

*A democracy is when the people have the right to vote, free speech, and free choices.*

[3] The sample responses included in this chapter were transcribed directly from students' papers. Errors have not been corrected.

*A democracy is a system of government based upon individual freedoms and free-enterprise. Freedoms like guarantee to trial by jury, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, etc.*

*A democracy is a country where church and state are seperated, where people have certain individual rights, and where a man or woman is elected by the people for office.*

Other types of acceptable responses were extremely rare. In both years, most of the unacceptable responses were rated as such because they were overly vague or nonsensical. The following are representative of such responses.

*A democracy is a political system which is involved with the government and has controlled much of the things we do now.*

*Democracy is what we have to keep people straight on certain things.*

*A democracy is a title given to such procedures for their beliefs in government.*

In 1976, approximately 16 percent of the students wrote responsés to the democracy task that were judged unacceptable. In 1988, this figure dropped significantly, to roughly 12 percent.

### Trends in Students' Ability to Identify the Value of Multiple Newspaper Publishers

In the 1976 and 1988 assessments, 13- and 17-year-old students were asked to explain in writing why it might be good to have the newspapers in a city written and published by different companies. Students were expected to refer to such advantages as having multiple points of view on different issues or having broader coverage of the news. TABLE 1.6 presents a condensed version of the scoring criteria used to evaluate students' responses and the percentages of the students who produced each type of response.

At age 13, there was a significant decline from 1976 to 1988 in the percentage of students who generated acceptable responses to the newspaper task. There was essentially no change at age 17. In 1976, 86 percent of the 13-year-olds and 88 percent of the 17-year-olds wrote responses that were judged acceptable; in 1988, these percentages were 79 and 86 percent, respectively.

In both age groups, the most common response to the newspaper question was that having more than one newspaper in

TABLE 1.6 **Trends in 13- and 17-Year-Olds' Performance on the "Newspaper" Task, 1976 and 1988**

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AGE 13 | | AGE 17 | |
| DEFINITION | 1976 | 1988 | 1976 | 1988 |
| **Acceptable Responses** | | | | |
| Refers to different viewpoints on the same news story | 32.7 (2.0)* | 40.8 (1.5) | 58.6 (1.7)* | 63.1 (1.6) |
| Refers to wider range of news coverage | 26.6 (1.1)* | 14.3 (0.9) | 16.5 (1.0)* | 10.0 (0.9) |
| Other acceptable responses | 26.3 (1.4) | 23.4 (1.0) | 13.0 (0.8) | 13.2 (1.0) |
| **Total** | 85.6 (1.5)* | 78.5 (1.1) | 88.1 (1.0) | 86.3 (1.3) |
| **Unacceptable Responses** | 14.4 (1.1)* | 21.5 (1.1) | 11.9 (0.8) | 13.7 (1.0) |

* Shows statistically significant difference from 1988 at the .05 level. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

a city would help encourage the expression of different viewpoints. The percentages of 13-year-old students providing responses of this nature increased across the 12-year period (from 33 to 41 percent), and the percentages of 17-year-olds who did so also rose (from 59 percent to 63 percent). The following are examples of responses that discussed the value of having newspapers that expressed different viewpoints.

*It would be good to have the newspapers in a city published by more than one company so more than one view may be expressed on a subject. (Age 13)*

*Because then you get all sides of the story. That way you can hear a bunch of different stories that maybe the other newspaper missed. (Age 13)*

*Because the companies might have different views on a topic. And we the people shouldn't be subjected to just one view. (Age 17)*

*Each paper will present different facts and different opinions. They will sway their stories in different directions. By having more than one, you will see the story from different views, and this will help you to arrive at a conclusion. (Age 17)*

The next most common response was that having more than one newspaper would permit wider coverage of the news. These responses were less common in 1988 than in 1976, however. At age 13, the percentage of student responses that discussed the value of having wider news coverage dropped from 27 percent in 1976 to 14 percent 12 years later. At age 17, the percentage of these responses fell from 17 to 10 percent over the same period. The following are representative of responses that discussed the value of wider news coverage.

*To get more news from different places, and different views. (Age 13)*

*Because people want to know what is happening all around in the world. And it is more to read about. (Age 13)*

*Because some newspapers may be able to get different information. If one newspaper refuses to publish something the people need to now, the other might publish it. Also some companies may publish things in their local part of the city so local people will know what's going on. (Age 17)*

*To give a variety and so they can get all of the news. Not just what will fit into one paper. (Age 17)*

In both years, about one-quarter of the 13-year-old students and approximately 13 percent of the 17-year-olds gave other acceptable reasons why it would be good to have more than one newspaper — for example, noting that it would help stimulate competition or protect the public in the event that one newspaper went out of business. The following are examples of these papers.

*So that the people could have there choice of which paper they want to buy and to see which one is better. (Age 13)*

*Because if one company happens to go out of buisness there's always another one. (Age 13)*

*It is good to have newspapers by more than one company, because it is competition. There is more than just one point of view. Help to keep the price down. The story is told twice and you can receive more facts and different ideas about the situation. (Age 17)*

Finally, some of the students in each age group generated responses to the newspaper task that were rated unacceptable. In many of these unacceptable papers, the reasons given for having more than one newspaper published were nonsensical or irrelevant. Examples of such papers are provided below.

*Maybe one company take some parts of it, and the others take the rest. (Age 13)*

*It might be good to have the newspapers in a city written and published by more than one company because there would be more copies so more people can read it. (Age 13)*

*Because it might be stolen and they can look on it to see where it came from. (Age 17)*

## Summary

Although the trends in civics achievement for 13- and 17-year-olds reveal only subtle changes, a few patterns stand out. Thirteen-year-old students assessed in 1988 performed as well as or better than their counterparts assessed in either 1976 or 1982, on average, while 17-year-olds participating in the most recent assessment tended to perform significantly less well than their counterparts in the earlier assessments.

The average civics proficiency of Black and Hispanic 13-year-olds improved significantly across time, while the achievement of White students remained constant. Among 17-year-olds, minority students' average civics achievement remained relatively stable over the 12 years, while White students' achievement declined significantly.

There were no significant performance changes across time among 13-year-old students attending schools in different types of communities, although students in advantaged urban schools appeared to perform somewhat less well in 1988 than their counterparts had in 1976. At age 17, there were significant declines in performance for students attending schools in each of the types of communities studied.

The performance of 13-year-old males remained relatively constant across time, while that of females rose significantly from 1982 to 1988. Thirteen-year-old students in the Northeast, Southeast, and West seemed to make slight gains across the years. At age 17, the average proficiency of males and females declined significantly from 1976 to 1988, as did the proficiency of students in the West. Those in the Northeast and Central regions showed some signs of declining performance across time, but these changes were not significant.

Most students were able to generate acceptable responses to the open-response questions included in the civics trend assessments. Seventeen-year-olds participating in the 1976 and 1988 assessments were asked to define democracy, and in each year, more than three-quarters of the students (84 to 88 percent) provided acceptable definitions. Most of these referred to popular sovereignty or individual liberties. Students at ages 13 and 17 also were asked to state why it would be good to have more than one newspaper in a city, and again most were able to provide an acceptable reason. In 1988, 79 percent of the 13-year-olds and 86 percent of the 17-year-olds identified at least one valid reason why having more than one newspaper would be advantageous. At age 13, this represented a significant decline in performance from 1976.

PART TWO

# Patterns of Achievement at Grades 4, 8, and 12, 1988

THE OBJECTIVES FOR THE 1988 civics assessment were developed through a broad-based consensus process involving civics and government educators from various levels of education, as well as school administrators, social science researchers, and curriculum specialists. The objectives defined three dimensions of civic education — context, cognition, and content — that were used as a foundation for developing the assessment.[1]

First, the objectives stated, civic education should build students' understanding of the various *contexts* of American political life, including the home, school, community, state, nation, and world. Second, it ought to develop important *cognitive* skills — such as knowing, understanding, and applying — that allow students to deal with particular civic facts, concepts, terminology, procedures, and ideas. Third, students should build an understanding of civic *content*. Within the content domain, four critical areas of learning were defined: democratic principles and the purpose of government; structures and functions of political institutions; political processes; and rights, responsibilities, and the law.

NAEP staff and consultants developed an extensive set of questions to evaluate students' grasp of these intersecting dimensions of civics. The items were primarily in multiple-choice format, but one open-ended item given at grades 8 and 12 asked students to respond in writing to a question on the responsibilities of the president.

[1]Educational Testing Service. *Civics: United States Government and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1987).

Like the results from the civics trend assessments described in Part I, the results from the 1988 grade-level civics assessment were analyzed using item response theory (IRT) technology, which allowed NAEP to construct a common proficiency scale ranging from 0 to 500.[3] The following chapters use the 1988 civics proficiency scale to compare civic knowledge and understandings across the grades as well as to study variations in performance according to particular demographic, home, and instructional factors.

In Chapter Two, the percentages of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders who reached each proficiency level in the 1988 assessment — and the types of skills and understandings they possessed — are studied to evaluate the growth of students' knowledge and understandings across the grades.

Chapter Three describes students' civics proficiency from a wider perspective, comparing average performance across the grades as well as across subpopulations defined by demographic, home, and school-related characteristics. Differences in the percentages of students in different subgroups who reached each proficiency level also are examined.

Chapter Four discusses the range of students' knowledge in the four content areas represented in the 1988 civics assessment: Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government; Structures and Functions of Political Institutions; Political Processes; and Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law. NAEP compared the percentages of students who responded correctly to items within each content area, providing further insight into the growth of students' knowledge and understandings across the grades.

Chapter Five focuses on the frequency of social studies classes reported by fourth-grade students and the amount of social studies instruction reported by students in the eighth and twelfth grades. Chapter Six discusses the content of students' civics and American government instruction and the teaching approaches used by their teachers.

[3] As noted in Part I, the ranges for the age-level trend scale (0 to 100) and the grade-level 1988 scale (0 to 500) were differentiated so as to prevent confusion between the results from these two distinct assessments.

CHAPTER TWO

# Levels of Civics Proficiency Across the Grades

THE RESULTS FROM NAEP's 1988 civics assessment of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students were analyzed using item response theory (IRT) technology and summarized on a common 500-point scale. Based on the range of student performance across the scale, four levels of proficiency were defined:

- **Level 200:** Recognizes the Existence of Civic Life
- **Level 250:** Understands the Nature of Political Institutions and the Relationship Between Citizen and Government
- **Level 300:** Understands Specific Government Structures and Functions
- **Level 350:** Understands a Variety of Political Institutions and Processes

These levels are defined in FIGURE 2.1. In theory, proficiency levels below 200 or above 350 could have been defined; however, it was not practical to do so because so few students in the assessment performed at the extreme ends of the scale.[6]

To describe each level of student performance in a constructive way, NAEP used empirical procedures to identify sets of items that discriminated between performance at adjacent levels on the scale. In this stage of the scale-definition process, items were sorted by students' likelihood of success. For example, if most students attaining Level 250 answered a particular item successfully, and students at Level 200 had a much lower probability of answering it correctly, then the item was said to be characteristic of performance at Level 250.[7]

[6] Students' performance in NAEP's reading, mathematics, and science assessments varied more, making it possible to define Level 150 for the scales in those subject areas.

[7] More detailed information on NAEP's scaling procedures can be found in the Procedural Appendix.

FIGURE 2.1 **Levels of Civics Proficiency**

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

LEVEL 200: **Recognizes the Existence of Civic Life**

Students at this level have a rudimentary knowledge of civics. They possess a beginning political awareness of the distinctions between the public and private domains and are familiar with some of the functions of government that pervade their immediate experience. They have some knowledge about elections and are developing an awareness of democratic principles such as the rule of law, as evidenced by their understanding that laws apply to government officials. These students also recognize that individuals — specifically the accused — have rights. Their elementary political vocabulary includes such terms as candidate, ballot, vice president, judge, juror, and citizen.

LEVEL 250: **Understands the Nature of Political Institutions and the Relationship Between Citizen and Government**

Students at this level are developing a knowledge of the nature of democratic institutions and processes. For example, they recognize the value of having more than one candidate in an election and the importance of the secret ballot. They are aware of the functions of a variety of government institutions and display a beginning understanding of federalism, as indicated by their ability to recognize the responsibilities of different levels of government. These students are developing an understanding of the reciprocal relationship between citizen and government. In addition to perceiving the purpose of individual rights in a democratic society and being able to identify some of these rights, such as the right to vote, they know of alternative ways to influence government — for example, making public speeches or writing letters to public officials. These students are developing a broader and more diverse political vocabulary.

LEVEL 300: **Understands Specific Government Structures and Functions**

At this level, students have a more differentiated understanding of the structures, functions, and powers of American government as prescribed in the Constitution. For example, they have an increased understanding of federalism, are aware of the separation and allocation of powers, and grasp the concept of judicial review. These students are also familiar with certain historical events and legal precedents that have helped to shape our democratic heritage. They can apply their knowledge of individual rights to particular situations, and their conception of citizen action now includes cooperative political activity, such as boycotts and lobbying. These students are familiar with such terms as chief executive, constitutional rights, veto, and lobbyist, indicating an increasing understanding of the language of American politics. They can apply their civic knowledge to a larger number and variety of complex situations.

LEVEL 350: **Understands a Variety of Political Institutions and Processes**

Students at this level are distinguished by their broader and more detailed knowledge of the various institutions of government. For example, they can describe the responsibilities of the president, the Congressional power to override presidential vetoes and levy taxes, and the practice of judicial review. These students have a more elaborated understanding of a range of political processes — for example, presidential campaigns, primary elections, and public opinion polls. Their expanding political vocabulary includes such specialized terms as closed primary, impeachment, referendum, and recall election.

The four sets of questions — corresponding to the four proficiency levels on the NAEP civics scale — were studied by a panel of distinguished civics educators, who carefully articulated the types of knowledge, skills, and reasoning abilities demonstrated by correct responses to the questions in each set. This information was used to characterize each level of civics proficiency using the contextual, cognitive, and content dimensions specified in the assessment framework. As a result of this process, each performance level was described in a manner that portrayed students' knowledge and understanding of civic content and their ability to apply these in a variety of contexts.

### Levels of Civics Proficiency for the Nation

TABLE 2.1 shows the percentages of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students who performed at or above each level of civics proficiency in the 1988 assessment.

The following sections describe per-

**TABLE 2.1** Levels of Civics Proficiency for the Nation, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE LEVEL | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
| **LEVEL 200** Recognizes the Existence of Civic Life | 71.2 (1.2) | 94.4 (0.4) | 98.8 (0.2) |
| **LEVEL 250** Understands the Nature of Political Institutions and the Relationship Between Citizen and Government | 9.6 (0.8) | 61.4 (1.0) | 89.2 (0.7) |
| **LEVEL 300** Understands Specific Government Structures and Functions | 0.1 (0.1) | 12.7 (0.7) | 49.0 (1.1) |
| **LEVEL 350** Understands a Variety of Political Institutions and Processes | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.3 (0.1) | 6.0 (0.5) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. Standard errors of less than 0.05 are rounded to 0.0. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

formance at each level and provide sample items of the type that students at each level were likely to answer correctly. It should be emphasized that the sample items presented here were chosen only for illustrative purposes; they do not include all items in the assessment or represent all that students should know about civics.

The results for students in grades 4, 8, and 12 were placed on a common scale to track improvements in proficiency across the grades. It is expected that students' proficiency will increase as they proceed through school — and the results show unequivocally that it does. There were considerable differences between fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders in the breadth and depth of civic knowledge.

### Level 200: Recognizes the Existence of Civic Life

| GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
|---|---|---|
| 71.2 (1.2) | 94.4 (0.4) | 98.8 (0.2) |

Students performing at or above this level of proficiency showed a rudimentary understanding of civic life, centering on the kinds of information that could be gained from life experience. These students were able to distinguish between the types of services performed by government and those performed by individuals. They appeared to have a rudimentary knowledge of voting and elections and possessed a basic civic vocabulary. In addition, these students displayed a beginning understanding of democratic principles, such as the rule of law. They knew, for example, that one of the government's major purposes is to make laws, that laws provide for safety, and that even high officials such as judges and army generals are supposed to obey laws. Students performing at or beyond this level seemed to be familiar with the rights of individuals — particularly the accused.

Sample items representative of performance at Level 200 are provided below.

Many cities and towns have crosswalk laws. These laws say that you must use a crosswalk and obey any "WALK" or "DON'T WALK" signs.

The main reason a city or town might have a crosswalk law is to

A punish people who break the law
B make traffic move more slowly
© help people cross the street safely
D keep cars from driving on busy streets

Who would become President of the United States if the President dies?

A The Secretary of State
B The Speaker of the House
C The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
Ⓓ The Vice-President

Here is a list of jobs. For each one, decide if the job is something local governments do for people.

| | YES, local governments do this job for people. | NO, local governments do not do this job for people. |
|---|---|---|
| Taking care of parks | Ⓐ | B |
| Cleaning streets | Ⓐ | B |

To vote in a national or state election in the United States, a person must usually be a

Ⓐ citizen
B parent
C worker
D homeowner

Suppose a person has just been arrested because the police have evidence that he or she has stolen some money.

Does the accused person have the right to know what he or she is accused of?

Ⓐ Yes
B No
C I don't know

Look at the sample ballot below and answer the question following it. (Do not fill out the ballot.)

SAMPLE BALLOT

| | | NEW TOWN PARTY | FREE VOTE PARTY |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vote for one | MAYOR | ☐ Maria Delgato | ☐ Anthony Velleli |
| Vote for one | TAX COLLECTOR | ☐ Abel Jones | ☐ Ann Madison |
| Vote for three | TOWN COUNCIL | ☐ Tameika Washington<br>☐ Patricia Andrews<br>☐ Joe Olson | ☐ Adam Polsky<br>☐ Annette Franks<br>☐ Carnella DiMario |

Who is a candidate for tax collector?

A Maria Delgato
B Adam Polsky
Ⓒ Ann Madison
D Joe Olson

Seventy-one percent of the fourth graders, 94 percent of the eighth graders, and virtually all twelfth graders performed at or above Level 200 in the 1988 civics assessment.

Students in the early grades typically study their communities, and most fourth graders can therefore be expected to be acquainted with such functions of local government as catching lawbreakers, caring for parks, and erecting stop signs. Some of the knowledge and understandings evident at this level may also have been acquired from the popular media. In particular, students' detailed knowledge of the rights of the accused and the vocabulary of the courtroom would appear to have been influenced by popular television programs. Parents, too, may have contributed to students' learning by discussing civic issues and topics with their children.

## Level 250: Understands the Nature of Political Institutions and the Relationship Between Citizen and Government

| GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
|---|---|---|
| 9.6 (0.8) | 61.4 (1.0) | 89.2 (0.7) |

Students at this level appear to have progressed beyond a basic civic awareness, as they demonstrated an understanding of government responsibilities and the interrelationships between citizens and government. These students also seemed cognizant of the purpose of individual rights in a democratic society — in particular, the right to be treated equitably, the right to freedom of speech, and the right to a fair trial. They were aware not only of the right to vote, but also of alternative ways to influence government, such as by writing letters of protest, presenting views to the media, and persuading legislators to change laws. These students displayed a command of a broad and diverse civic vocabulary, as they could interpret such terms as legislator, governor, constitutional right, prosecution, and poll tax.

The following items are representative of those answered correctly by students performing at or above Level 250.

The President of the United States is elected for a term of

A 2 years
(B) 4 years
C 6 years
D 8 years

In the United States, an individual citizen has the right to

A impeach the President
(B) vote for government officials
C make new laws
D collect taxes

"Justice for all" means that under the law everybody should be

(A) treated equally
B equally rich
C free
D independent

People in the United States elect their government officials by

A public surveys
B television newscasts
C telegrams
Ⓓ secret ballots

Under the law, United States citizens may work to change government policy by doing all of the following EXCEPT

A making public speeches
B writing letters of protest
C persuading legislators to change laws
Ⓓ refusing to pay taxes

Look at the sample ballot below and answer the question following it. (Do not fill out the ballot.)

SAMPLE BALLOT

| | | NEW TOWN PARTY | FREE VOTE PARTY |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vote for one | MAYOR | ☐ Maria Delgato | ☐ Anthony Velleli |
| Vote for one | TAX COLLECTOR | ☐ Abel Jones | ☐ Ann Madison |
| Vote for three | TOWN COUNCIL | ☐ Tamerka Washington<br>☐ Patricia Andrews<br>☐ Joe Olson | ☐ Adam Polsky<br>☐ Annette Franks<br>☐ Carnella DiMario |

How many people will be elected to the town council?

A 1
B 2
Ⓒ 3
D 4

Most of the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution deal with

(A) individual rights
B the method of electing the President
C the taxing powers of the federal government
D the powers of the Supreme Court

All of the following are requirements for voting in a national election EXCEPT the need to

A be registered to vote
B be a United States citizen
(C) pay a poll tax
D meet the age requirement

While only 10 percent of the fourth graders reached or exceeded this proficiency level, 61 percent of the eighth graders and close to 90 percent of the twelfth graders succeeded in doing so.

Students performing at this level were able to understand rather specialized information and terminology not frequently encountered in the media or the community. Despite their expanding knowledge base, however, these students were generally unable to analyze and apply their understandings.

Concern may be warranted for the 10 percent of the twelfth-grade students who failed to reach this proficiency level. Without a general understanding of political institutions or of the ways in which individual citizens can express their opinions, these students may find it difficult as adults to participate intelligently in the democratic process in this country.

## Level 300: Understands Specific Government Structures and Functions

| GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
|---|---|---|
| 0.1 (0.1) | 12.7 (0.7) | 49.0 (1.1) |

Students who have reached this level of proficiency show a knowledge of the structures, functions, and powers of American government as described in the Constitution. They also demonstrate a grasp of the principles that underlie such features of American government as the separation of powers or checks and balances.

The following items are illustrative of those answered correctly by students performing at or above Level 300.

The term "separation of powers" refers to the

A state powers and duties that are not given to the central government
(B) division of authority among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government
C division of the legislature into two houses
D creation of a national capital that is not a part of any state

A witness who invokes the Fifth Amendment at a hearing of a United States Senate investigating committee is

A demanding to have the assistance of a lawyer
B demanding the right to confront and cross-examine witnesses
(C) refusing to answer questions to avoid self-incrimination
D refusing to answer questions before a nonjudicial body

How is the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court selected?

A By a national election with approval by a majority of the state governors
B Through a majority vote by the existing Supreme Court justices
C By constitutional amendment and presidential signature
(D) Through appointment by the President with the consent of the Senate

According to the United States Constitution, which of the following has the power to declare war?

A United States Supreme Court
(B) United States Congress
C United Nations
D Joint Chiefs of Staff

Which of the following best describes the way in which the United States Constitution assigns governmental power?

A It assigns it entirely to the states.
B It assigns it entirely to the national government.
(C) It divides it between the states and the national government.
D It divides it between the states and the federal courts.

How many representatives does each state have in the United States House of Representatives?

A Two
B Three
C The number varies according to the area of the state.
(D) The number varies according to the population of the state.

What is the major criticism of the electoral college system in the United States?

A Its procedures delay the selection of the winner in presidential elections.
B Its existence encourages the growth of third parties.
(C) It permits a candidate who did not win a majority of popular votes to be declared the President.
D It undermines the power of the national party conventions.

**PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE ENGAGED IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL IN YEAR 19XX**

| Educational Level | Very Active | Fairly Active | Fairly Inactive | Very Inactive |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| College Education | 28% | 30% | 30% | 12% |
| High School Education | 9 | 17 | 40 | 34 |
| Grade School Education | 5 | 11 | 33 | 51 |

Which of the following best summarizes the information presented in the table above?

(A) The more education people have, the more likely they are to be politically active.
B The more education people have, the less likely they are to be politically active.
C The kind of education people have is more important than the amount of education in influencing political participation.
D There is no relationship between educational levels and political activity.

Virtually none of the fourth graders, 13 percent of the eighth graders, and nearly half of the twelfth graders performed at or above Level 300 in 1988.

The civic vocabulary of students at this level reflects a detailed knowledge of the language of American politics, coupled with an ability to analyze varied and complex citizenship issues. Since knowledge and understandings of this sort would likely help students to act as informed citizens, it is disappointing that fewer than half of the twelfth-grade students reached this level of competence in the 1988 assessment. This concern is exacerbated by the fact that NAEP assessed only those twelfth graders who were in school at the time of the assessment. Students who had already dropped out of school by the twelfth grade may be expected to perform less well than their in-school peers.

### Level 350: Understands a Variety of Political Institutions and Processes

| GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
|---|---|---|
| 0.0 (0.0) | 0.3 (0.1) | 6.0 (0.5) |

Students who performed at or above the 350 level exhibited a broad and multifaceted understanding of the institutions of government, such as the Cabinet and the judiciary, and the processes by which they operate. These students also were able to transfer and apply their civics learning to a variety of problem contexts. Specific information about the roles of Cabinet members and the provisions of the U.S. Constitution and its amendments were part of their civic knowledge base. Students performing at or above this highest level recognized the historic roots of government structures and functions, such as the source of presidential powers, and were able to perform detailed and complex analyses of civic data — for example, identifying the steps one must follow to become president of the United States.

The following items are representative of those performed successfully by students at or above Level 350.

Under the United States Constitution, the power to tax belongs to the

A President
B Department of Treasury
C Supreme Court
(D) Congress

Which of the following groups may vote in a closed primary election?

A All eligible voters
B Only registered voters with a party affiliation
C Only dues-paying members of a political party
D Only elected delegates to a party convention

Bicameralism is best defined as a

A government composed of two principal branches
B multilevel judicial system containing a higher court for appeals
C system of checks and balances between two branches of government
D legislative system composed of two houses or chambers

Which of the following activities is an example of cooperation between state and national governments?

A Printing money
B Building interstate highways
C Collecting and delivering mail
D Making treaties

In the execution of its responsibilities, which of the following is LEAST likely to be influenced by lobbying?

A The Supreme Court
B The House of Representatives
C The Senate
D A state governor

Judicial review is best described as the

A right of Congress to reverse decisions made by the Supreme Court
B assessment by the American Bar Association of the quality of judges' decisions
C President's right to review and possibly veto the actions of federal judges
D authority of the courts to decide whether the actions of other branches of government are constitutional

"We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men and women are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness . . . ."

The authors of this quotation, who revised an important earlier document, were

A justices of the Supreme Court in Marbury v. Madison in 1803
(B) delegates to the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848
C members of the Free-Soil party in 1856
D officers of the Whig party of the 1840s

Virtually none of the fourth or eighth graders and only 6 percent of the twelfth graders performed at or above Level 350 in the 1988 civics assessment. It may be unreasonable to expect many students to reach this level of proficiency, given the sophisticated civic knowledge and understandings represented. Because the students at this level may well represent the pool from which future civic leaders are drawn, however, it is disappointing that more high-school seniors did not reach this proficiency level.

## Summary

Almost three-quarters of the fourth-grade students (71 percent), 94 percent of the eighth-grade students, and virtually all of the twelfth-grade students achieved Level 200 performance in the 1988 civics assessment, exhibiting a basic awareness of the vocabulary, institutions, and processes of citizenship. Many of the understandings demonstrated by students performing at this level were of the type that could be gained from parents, the media, and community life, reinforcing and supplementing the learning that occurs in elementary social studies classrooms.

Sixty-one percent of the eighth graders and 89 percent of the twelfth graders performed at Level 250, which is characterized by a knowledge of the nature of political institutions and the relationships between citizens and government.

Half the students in grade 12 performed at Level 300, exhibiting a knowledge of specific government institutions. As the kinds of knowledge and understandings represented by performance at this level are likely to be needed for informed participation in political life in this country, the fact that half the high-school seniors failed to reach this level is of concern. Only 6 percent of the high-school seniors reached the highest level of civic proficiency defined by NAEP, but those who did displayed an impressive range and depth of civic understandings.

CHAPTER THREE

# Civics Proficiency Across Subpopulations

THIS CHAPTER COMPARES the civics proficiency of various subpopulations of students, defined by demographic, school, and home characteristics. To gather information on these characteristics, NAEP asks students participating in the assessments to answer a series of background questions, which are chosen based on existing research into the variables that relate to student learning. Thus, the survey results can be used to confirm and extend our understanding of these relationships.

In viewing the NAEP data, however, two points should be kept in mind. The first is that information on average proficiency and levels of proficiency masks variations in the performance of individual students within any given subpopulation. Thus, while one subpopulation may perform worse than others on average, some students within that subpopulation are likely to be among the most proficient while others are likely to be among the least proficient.[a] The second caution is that cause-and-effect relationships cannot be determined from the NAEP results — in particular, relationships between students' proficiency and their demographic, school, or home characteristics or their instructional experiences. Therefore, the NAEP assessment results are most useful when they are considered in light of other knowledge about the educational system and about the nature of student learning.

[a] See the Data Appendix for information on the distributions of performance by percentile for various subpopulations.

## Average Civics Proficiency for the Nation and Demographic Subpopulations

**TABLE 3.1 presents average civics proficiency results for the nation and for demographic subpopulations defined by gender, race/ethnicity, size and type of community, and region of the country.**

### TABLE 3.1 Average Civics Proficiency for the Nation and Demographic Subpopulations, 1988

| | AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
| **NATION** | 214.0 (0.9) | 259.7 (0.9) | 296.3 (1.1) |
| **GENDER** | | | |
| Male | 214.8 (1.3) | 258.7 (1.1) | 298.6 (1.6) |
| Female | 213.3 (1.1) | 260.6 (0.9) | 294.1 (1.1) |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | | | |
| White | 220.0 (1.0) | 266.3 (1.2) | 301.9 (1.2) |
| Black | 198.1 (2.2) | 243.6 (1.9) | 273.8 (1.9) |
| Hispanic | 199.5 (1.9) | 240.6 (1.7) | 279.2 (2.3) |
| **SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY** | | | |
| Advantaged Urban | 225.8 (2.1) | 269.8 (4.2) | 310.0 (2.8) |
| Disadvantaged Urban | 192.5 (2.3) | 240.5 (2.8) | 274.4 (2.8) |
| Rural | 214.9 (4.5) | 269.1 (3.0) | 299.2 (3.9) |
| **REGION** | | | |
| Northeast | 215.7 (1.9) | 263.3 (2.0) | 294.1 (2.4) |
| Southeast | 210.2 (2.0) | 254.0 (1.7) | 290.9 (1.8) |
| Central | 218.4 (2.3) | 264.1 (2.1) | 300.2 (1.8) |
| West | 212.3 (1.5) | 257.8 (1.4) | 299.2 (2.5) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value. Note: More detailed information on these subpopulations is provided in the Procedural Appendix.

At grades 4 and 8, males and females performed comparably, on average, but by grade 12, males had a slight proficiency advantage. At all three grades, White students tended to outperform their Black and Hispanic counterparts, and students attending schools in advantaged urban or rural communities tended to outperform those attending schools in disadvantaged urban communities.

There were no large or consistent differences in average proficiency across the regions, although fourth- and eighth-grade students in the Southeast and West did tend to perform slightly less well than their peers in the Northeast and Central regions. At grade 12, students in the West and Central regions outperformed those in the Northeast and Southeast.

### Levels of Civics Proficiency for Demographic Subpopulations

For any given subpopulation — for example, students in a particular region or racial/ethnic group — how do the percentages of students attaining each level of proficiency compare with the results for their classmates? That question is addressed in the following section of this chapter.

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**At all three grades, students attending schools in advantaged urban communities were more likely than those in disadvantaged urban community schools to reach each successive proficiency level.**

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## Gender

FIGURE 3.1 presents the percentages of males and females attaining each proficiency level on the NAEP civics scale. No significant performance gaps were found between fourth-grade boys and girls; the two groups were equally likely to reach Levels 200 and 250. But gaps were evident at grades 8 and 12. At grade 8, significantly higher percentages of females than males performed at or above Levels 200 and 250, while significantly higher percentages of males performed at or above Level 300. Among the twelfth-grade students, males were more likely than females to attain Levels 300 and 350. These performance disparities echo the differences found by NAEP in other subjects, including mathematics, science, U.S. history, and geography.[9]

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[9] John A. Dossey, Ina V.S. Mullis, Mary M. Lindquist, and Donald L. Chambers, *The 1986 Mathematics Report Card* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1988).

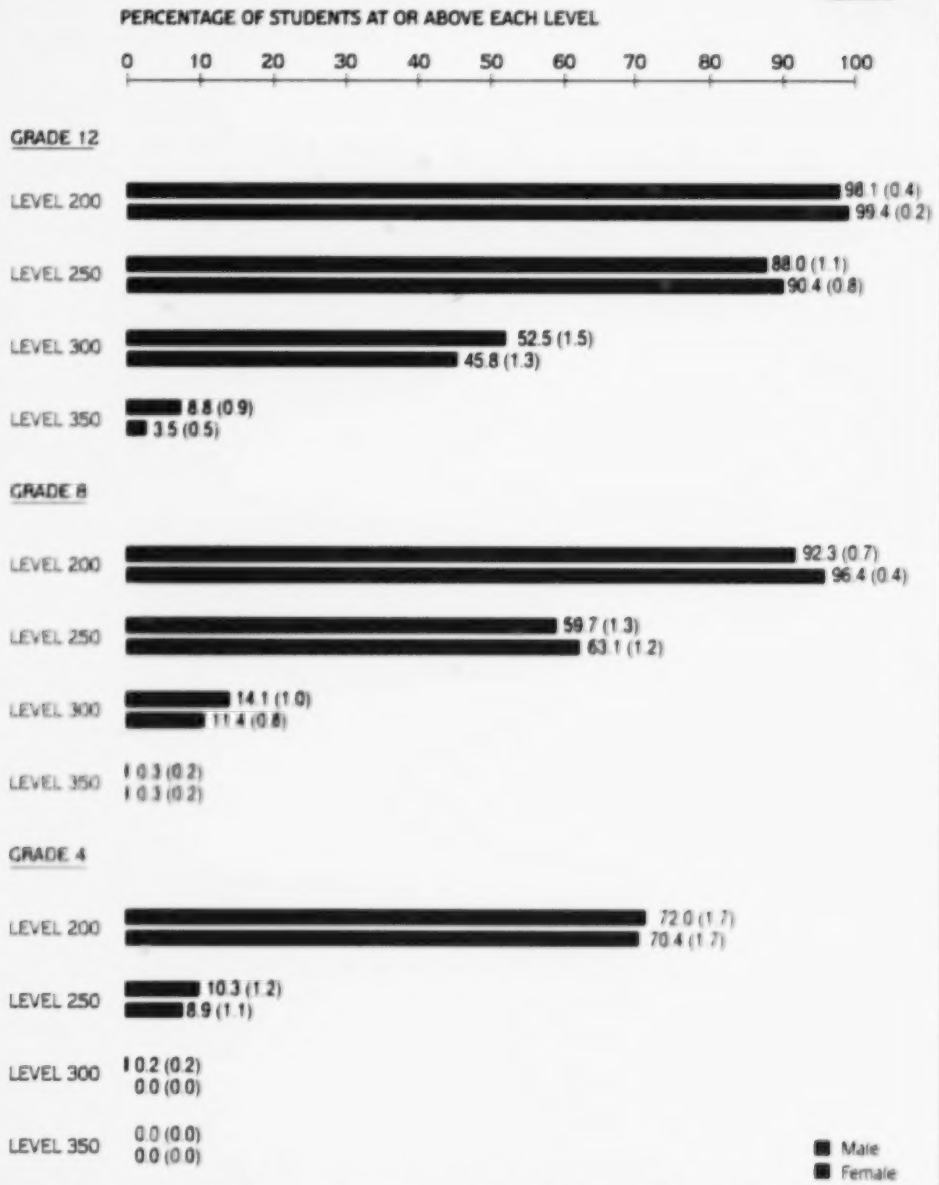
Educational Testing Service, *The Geography Learning of High-School Seniors* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1990).

Ina V.S. Mullis and Lynn B. Jenkins, *The 1988 Science Report Card* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1988).

David Hammack, Michael Hartoonian, John Howe, Lynn B. Jenkins, Linda S. Levstik, Walter MacDonald, Ina V.S. Mullis, and Eugene Owen, *The U.S. History Report Card* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1990).

FIGURE 3.1 **Levels of Civics Proficiency: Results by Gender, 1988**

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD




Standard errors are presented in parentheses. Standard errors of less than 0.05 are rounded to 0.0. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students at or above each level is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## Race/Ethnicity

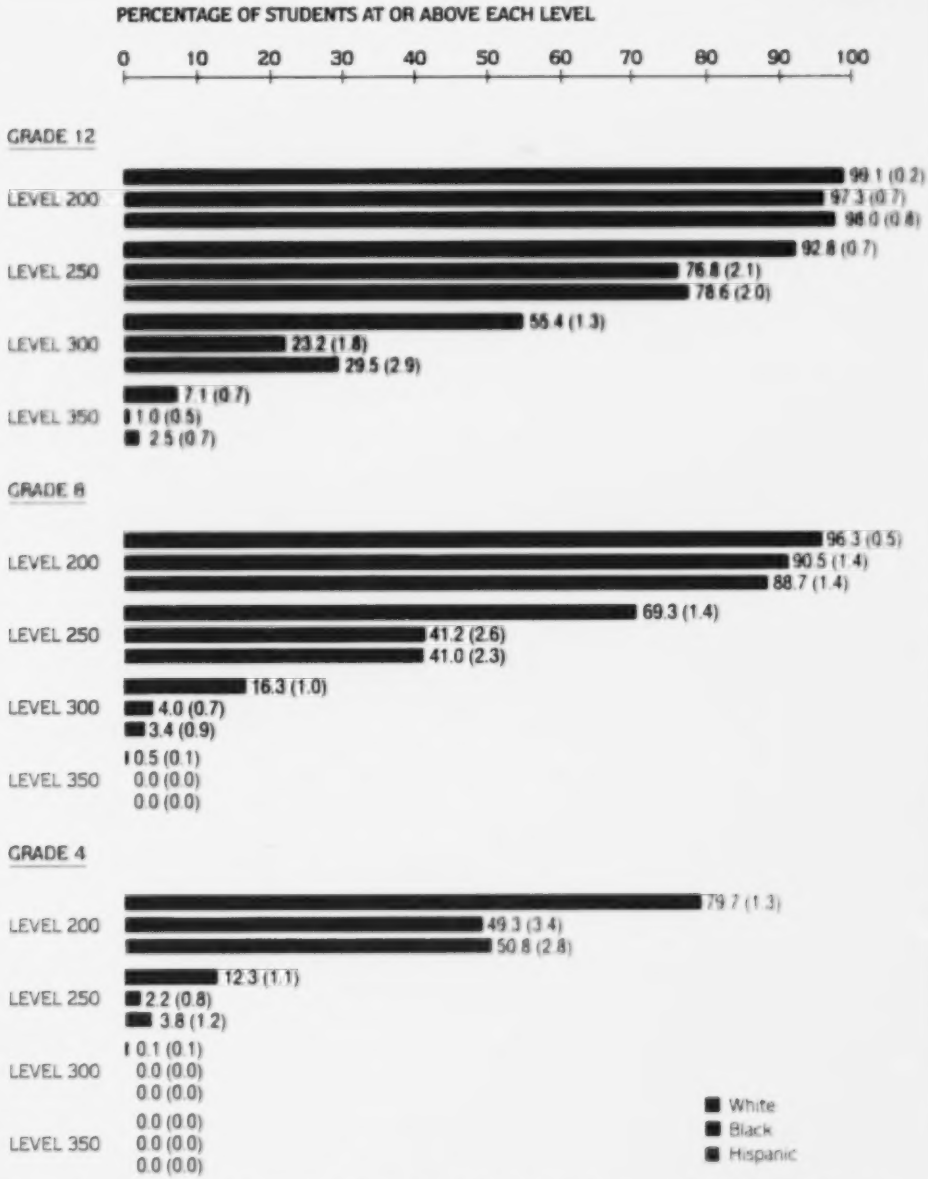
Just as performance gaps by race/ethnicity have been found in other subjects assessed by NAEP, such as writing, reading, mathematics, and science, so too have disparities in civics achievement been found between Black and Hispanic students and their White counterparts. Across the grades, White students were consistently more likely than minority students to attain the higher proficiency levels on the scale, as shown in FIGURE 3.2.

Most eighth- and twelfth-grade students performed at or above Level 200, but large differences were observed in the percentages of White, Black, and Hispanic fourth graders who did. Racial/ethnic performance disparities were evident in the upper grades, as well. Sixty-nine percent of the White eighth graders appeared to understand the nature of political institutions (reflected in performance at Level 250), compared to less than half of the Black or Hispanic students. In twelfth grade, more than half of the White students performed at or above Level 300, compared with approximately one-quarter to one-third of the minority students.

The fact that so many Black and Hispanic students did not reach even the middle levels of proficiency by the end of high school is of particular concern when one weighs the future implications. Improvements in society — such as the expansion of job opportunities for minorities or the procurement of better services for disadvantaged communities — depend heavily on citizen participation, and citizen participation is facilitated by knowledge of how the "system" operates.

FIGURE 3.2 **Levels of Civics Proficiency: Results by Race/Ethnicity, 1988**

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD




Standard errors are presented in parentheses. Standard errors of less than 0.05 are rounded to 0.0. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students at or above each level is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

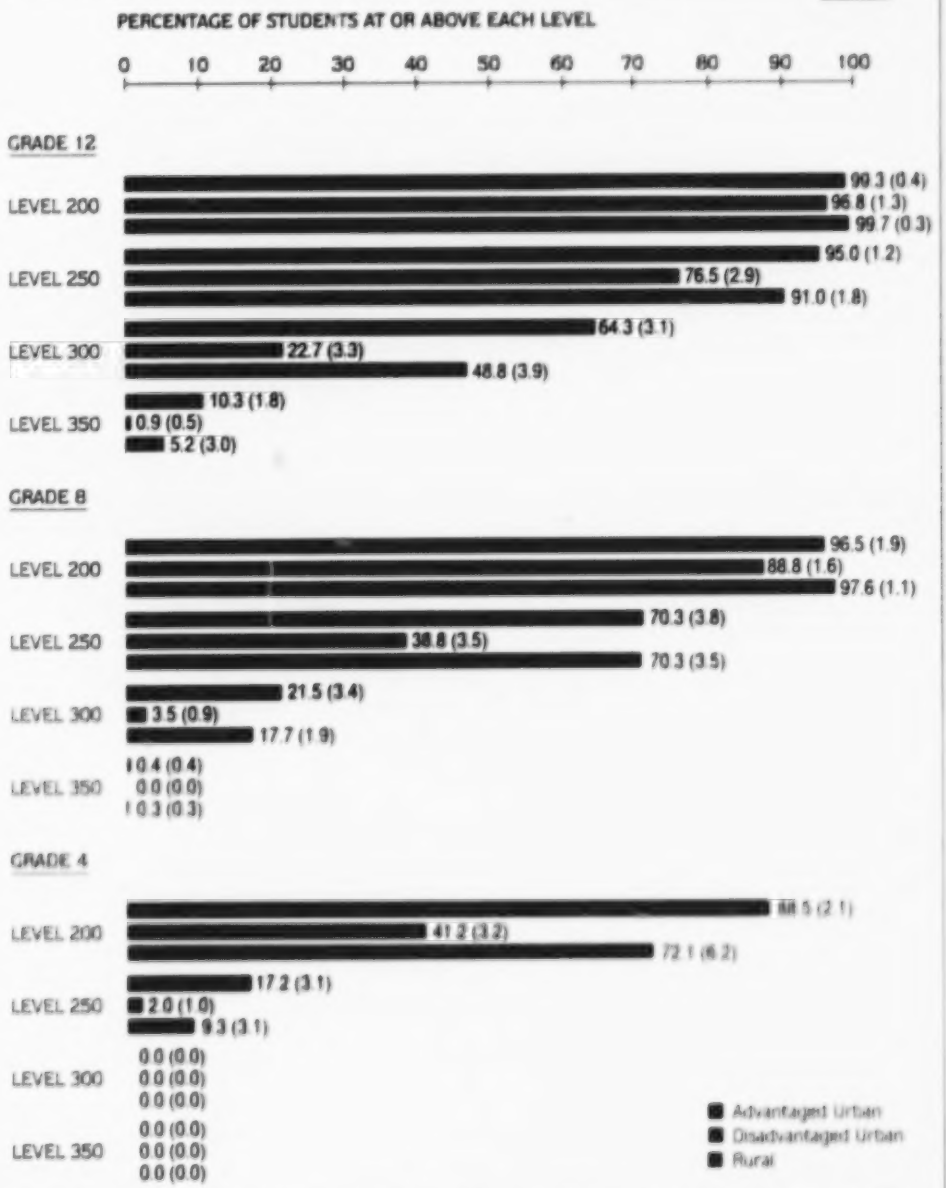
### Size and Type of Community

The average proficiency results presented earlier in this chapter revealed disparities in performance among students according to the types of communities in which their schools were located. As shown in FIGURE 3.3, these differences were repeated in the findings on levels of civics proficiency.

At all three grades, students attending schools in advantaged urban communities were more likely than students in disadvantaged urban community schools to reach each successive proficiency level. Although there were some differences in levels of proficiency between students attending schools in rural areas and in advantaged urban communities, with the former group outperforming the latter, these differences were neither large nor consistent.

FIGURE 3.3 **Levels of Civics Proficiency: Results by Size and Type of Community, 1988**

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD



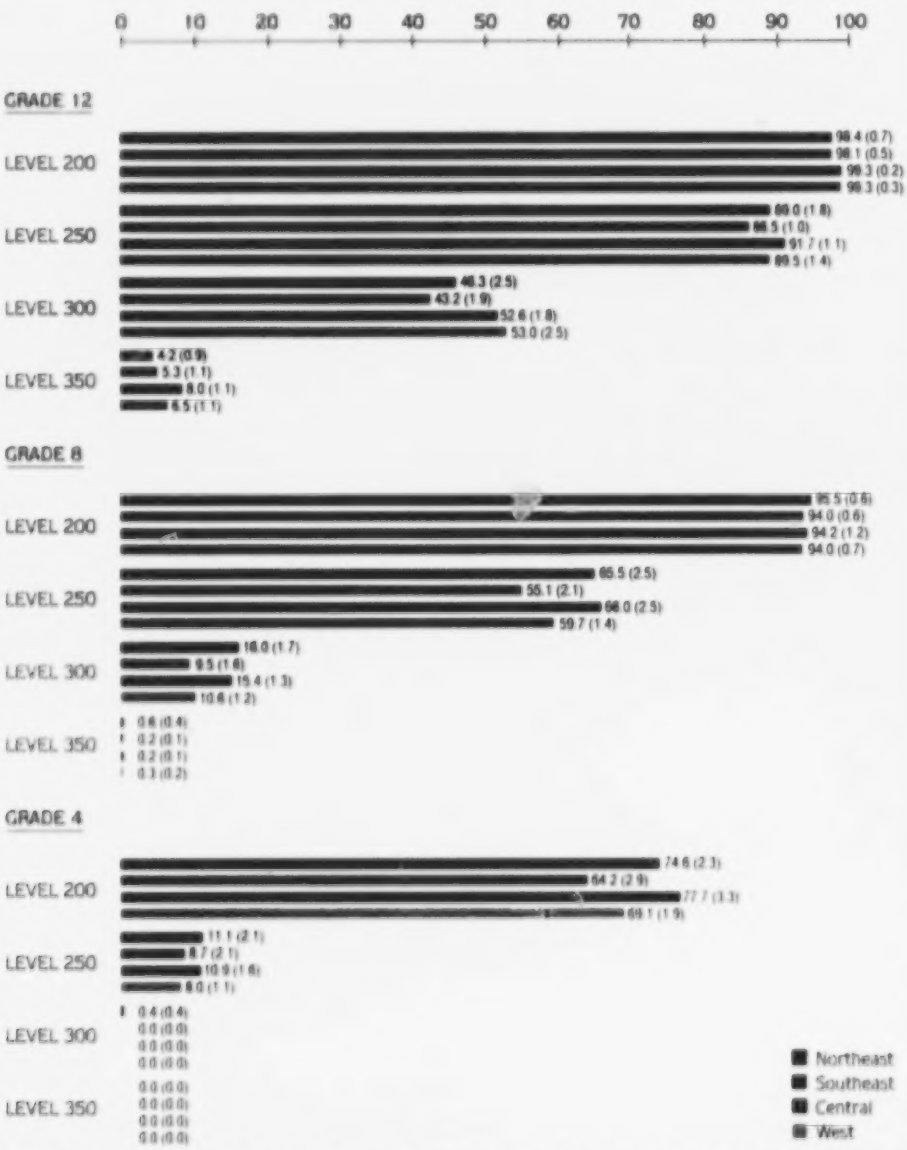

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. Standard errors of less than 0.05 are rounded to 0.0. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students at or above each level is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

**Region**

As shown in FIGURE 3.4, the regional variations in the percentages of students reaching each performance level were not so great as the variations by gender or by race/ethnicity. At grade 4, students in the Southeast and West were slightly less likely than students in the other regions to reach Level 200, but the differences were narrowed at Level 250. Among the eighth graders, students in all four regions were equally likely to reach Level 200, while students in the Southeast and West regions were somewhat less likely than those in the Northeast and Central regions to attain Levels 250 and 300. At grade 12, the pattern shifted somewhat, as students in the Southeast and Northeast were less likely than those in the Central and West regions to reach Level 300.

FIGURE 3.4 | **Levels of Civics Proficiency: Results by Region, 1988**

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD




Standard errors are presented in parentheses. Standard errors of less than 0.05 are rounded to 0.0. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students at or above each level is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## Average Civics Proficiency by Home and School Factors

In addition to exploring the relationships between civics proficiency and students' demographic characteristics, NAEP gathered information on the features of students' home lives that have been found to be related to educational achievement in other subjects. TABLE 3.2 summarizes the relationship between some of these variables and students' average civics proficiency.

Across the grades, students who had well-educated parents, both parents living at home, and a variety of reading materials tended to have higher civics

TABLE 3.2

### Average Civics Proficiency by Characteristics of the Home Environment, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | GRADE 4 | | GRADE 8 | | GRADE 12 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
| **PARENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION** | | | | | | |
| Less than high school | 4.7 | 207.5 (3.5) | 7.9 | 237.8 (2.2) | 7.3 | 273.0 (2.5) |
| Graduated high school | 13.5 | 211.2 (1.8) | 27.1 | 252.5 (1.3) | 24.0 | 285.0 (1.6) |
| Some college | 8.5 | 221.4 (2.8) | 19.4 | 263.7 (1.3) | 24.0 | 298.6 (1.4) |
| Graduated college | 39.2 | 222.5 (1.3) | 38.5 | 272.2 (1.1) | 42.6 | 307.4 (1.5) |
| **NUMBER OF PARENTS LIVING AT HOME** | | | | | | |
| Both parents | 78.8 | 216.9 (0.9) | 77.5 | 264.6 (1.0) | 76.4 | 300.6 (1.1) |
| One parent | 18.0 | 207.3 (1.8) | 20.0 | 250.5 (1.5) | 18.8 | 288.4 (2.0) |
| Neither | 3.2 | 183.6 (4.8) | 2.5 | 237.5 (3.9) | 4.9 | 278.1 (4.2) |
| **AMOUNT OF TIME MOTHER WORKS OUTSIDE THE HOME** | | | | | | |
| Full-time | — | — | 51.7 | 261.0 (1.0) | 54.6 | 297.1 (1.2) |
| Part-time | — | — | 21.9 | 266.7 (1.7) | 16.6 | 301.3 (1.7) |
| Not working | — | — | 23.9 | 258.9 (1.4) | 25.2 | 297.8 (1.4) |
| **NUMBER OF READING MATERIALS IN THE HOME** | | | | | | |
| 0 to 2 items | 27.9 | 202.2 (1.5) | 19.5 | 241.2 (1.5) | 12.2 | 272.3 (2.2) |
| 3 items | 35.6 | 214.6 (1.4) | 30.0 | 255.8 (1.2) | 24.4 | 291.7 (1.5) |
| 4 items | 36.4 | 223.4 (1.2) | 50.5 | 269.8 (1.0) | 63.4 | 303.3 (1.1) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value. Note: "Parents' Highest Level of Education" is a composite variable, developed from responses to two questions on the highest level of education attained by each parent. The response percentages for this variable and for "Amount of Time Mother Works Outside the Home" do not total 100 because some students reported they did not know the answers to the questions or did not live with their parents. The composite variable "Number of Reading Materials in the Home" was created by combining students' responses to four questions, asking whether they had a newspaper, magazine, encyclopedia, or dictionary at home.

proficiency than students who were less advantaged. On average, eighth-grade students whose mothers worked outside the home part-time outperformed those whose mothers worked full-time or not at all. At grade 12, however, such differences were no longer significant.

NAEP also gathered information from students on the amount of reading they did each day in school and for homework, the amount of time spent each day on homework, and on the amount of time spent watching television. This information is presented in TABLE 3.3.

TABLE 3.3

## Average Civics Proficiency by the Amount of Reading for School and by Time Spent Doing Homework and Watching Television, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | GRADE 4 | | GRADE 8 | | GRADE 12 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
| **TIME SPENT ON HOMEWORK EACH DAY** | | | | | | |
| None assigned | 18.3 | 219.4 (1.9) | 5.5 | 246.8 (2.8) | 9.0 | 280.9 (2.4) |
| Don't do | 3.2 | 197.5 (3.7) | 6.0 | 238.0 (2.8) | 7.8 | 285.4 (3.2) |
| 1/2 hour or less | 34.0 | 212.8 (1.4) | 19.8 | 258.7 (1.7) | 20.2 | 295.6 (1.8) |
| 1 hour | 26.4 | 217.1 (1.6) | 41.5 | 262.8 (1.0) | 32.9 | 298.8 (1.2) |
| More than 1 hour | 18.1 | 209.7 (2.0) | — | — | — | — |
| 2 hours | — | — | 19.3 | 265.1 (1.6) | 19.7 | 301.8 (1.6) |
| More than 2 hours | — | — | 7.9 | 261.5 (2.3) | 10.4 | 303.5 (2.4) |
| **PAGES READ EACH DAY IN SCHOOL AND FOR HOMEWORK** | | | | | | |
| 5 pages or fewer | 22.9 | 206.0 (1.8) | 31.4 | 250.8 (1.2) | 29.6 | 285.2 (1.7) |
| 6 to 10 pages | 25.4 | 214.9 (1.7) | 30.4 | 263.5 (1.2) | 25.2 | 295.5 (1.6) |
| 11 to 15 pages | 15.3 | 220.0 (1.5) | 16.4 | 266.0 (1.5) | 14.6 | 300.1 (1.9) |
| 16 to 20 pages | 15.3 | 213.3 (2.0) | 10.8 | 264.9 (1.8) | 11.7 | 302.3 (1.9) |
| More than 20 pages | 21.1 | 218.6 (1.9) | 10.9 | 264.5 (2.5) | 18.9 | 309.8 (2.0) |
| **TIME SPENT VIEWING TELEVISION EACH DAY** | | | | | | |
| 0 to 2 hours | 30.1 | 215.7 (2.3) | 28.6 | 266.9 (2.2) | 53.2 | 301.7 (1.8) |
| 3 to 5 hours | 43.0 | 219.2 (2.0) | 54.0 | 260.8 (1.6) | 40.2 | 294.2 (1.9) |
| 6 hours or more | 26.8 | 204.1 (1.7) | 17.4 | 245.8 (1.7) | 6.6 | 269.7 (2.3) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

At grade 4, no clear relationship was evident between the amount of time students reported spending on homework and their average civics proficiency. At grade 8 and particularly at grade 12, however, students' civics proficiency tended to increase with the amount of time they reported spending on homework each day for all school subjects. Just 18 percent of the students at grade 4, 27 percent at grade 8, and 30 percent at grade 12 reported spending more than an hour on homework each day.

The number of pages read in school or for homework is one proxy for academic rigor, and there was evidence that this measure was positively related to students' civics proficiency. At all three grades, students who reported reading fewer than five pages for school each day performed less well in the assessment, on average, than students who reported reading more. At grade 12, students who reported reading more than 20 pages each day exhibited the highest civics proficiency.

Fourth-grade students reported doing more reading than students in the eighth and twelfth grades — yet even the amount of daily reading reported by the youngest students was quite low.

At all three grades, students who watched excessive amounts of television (six hours or more each day) performed far less well than students who watched television less frequently. At grade 4, students who reported watching from zero to two hours of television each day performed comparably to those who watched from three to five hours each day. At the upper grades, those who watched little or no television outperformed their peers who watched between three and five hours.

To provide further insight into the relationships between civics proficiency and different educational variables at the high-school level, NAEP asked twelfth graders participating in the assessment to report on the type of school program in which they were enrolled and to predict what activity would take most of their time after graduation. TABLE 3.4 presents students' responses to these questions with their average proficiency.

The majority of seniors (58 percent) reported being enrolled in an academic or college preparatory program, and these students outperformed their counterparts enrolled in vocational-technical or general programs. Similarly, more than half (54 percent) of the high-school seniors planned to attend four-year college after they graduated, and these students performed better in the assessment than those who planned to attend two-year college or to work after high school.

TABLE 3.4

## Average Civics Proficiency at Grade 12 by Type of School Program and After-Graduation Plans, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
|---|---|---|
| **HIGH-SCHOOL PROGRAM** | | |
| Academic | 57.9 | 308.9 (1.0) |
| General | 33.8 | 281.9 (1.4) |
| Vocational-Technical | 8.4 | 271.5 (2.8) |
| **PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL** | | |
| Four-year college, service academy, or university | 53.9 | 311.0 (1.2) |
| Two-year college, or a vocational, technical, or business school | 21.0 | 283.7 (1.3) |
| Full-time work | 16.6 | 276.8 (1.6) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value. Note: The response percentages for "Plans After High School" do not total 100 because some students reported "other" plans.

### Summary

The patterns of student performance in the 1988 NAEP civics assessment reinforce the findings from other surveys of educational achievement conducted by NAEP in different subject areas. At all three grades assessed, White students tended to perform better than Black or Hispanic students. Despite an advantage for females at grade 4, males often outperformed females at the upper grades and the higher proficiency levels. Students attending schools in advantaged urban communities displayed higher average civics proficiency than those attending schools in disadvantaged urban communities. Further evidence of differences in achievement by socioeconomic status can be found in the relationships between student performance and other background factors. For example, students with more highly educated parents and with access to a variety of reading materials in the home tended to have higher civics proficiency than their counterparts.

In viewing the performance results across the regions, it appears that students in the Southeast tended to perform slightly less well than their counterparts in other regions; however, the differences were small. Finally, seniors in academic high-school programs and those planning to attend four-year colleges typically performed better than their classmates.

CHAPTER FOUR

# Students' Knowledge and Understanding of United States Government and Politics

CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE offered an overview of the civic knowledge and understandings of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 and the differences in average proficiency among various subpopulations. This chapter views the 1988 assessment results from a somewhat different perspective, as it explores students' performance in specific content areas represented in the assessment.

The objectives for the 1988 civics assessment defined four content areas that students should come to understand through their education in civics and government:

■ **Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government**
Students are expected to develop an understanding of the purpose of democratic government and of the principles expressed in foundational documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. Assessment items were designed to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of such principles as representative democracy, the social contract, judicial review, and checks and balances.

■ **Structures and Functions of Political Institutions**
Students are expected to acquire knowledge of the three branches of government and the organizational principles by which they function. Assessment items in this content area focused on students' knowledge of the powers of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the levels of government responsible for such functions as printing money and licensing marriages, the

responsibility and limits of each branch of government, and the way in which the system of checks and balances operates at the federal level (e.g., through veto, veto override, judicial review).

■ **Political Processes**
Students are expected to develop an awareness of the mechanisms by which citizens and politicians reach decisions and transform these decisions into political action. Typical items in this content area addressed the various forms of citizen action, the role of political parties and the nature of the primary system, lobbying, and the manner in which decisions are made at different levels and branches of government.

■ **Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law**
Students are expected to learn the specific rights and liberties guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution — for example, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the rights of criminal defendants. In addition to items addressing these issues, certain items also were designed to evaluate students' awareness of the relationship between laws and rights.[10]

These content areas were used to develop the items for the 1988 assessment; thus, each item was classified according to the content it addressed. Although the topics addressed in certain items may seem to fit logically into more than one content area, each item was classified in only one content area, according to its primary emphasis.

Like other NAEP surveys, the 1988 civics assessment was constructed so that the difficulty of the questions increased for each successive grade. That is, certain items were given only at grade 4 because the knowledge and understandings they addressed were perceived as being too basic for eighth or twelfth graders. Alternatively, other items were thought to be too sophisticated for the younger students and were given only to twelfth-grade students who were likely to have had more exposure to civics and government education. Some of the assessment items were given at only one grade while others were given at overlapping grades.

The sections that follow provide a fine-grained description of students' performance in each content area, with examples of items on which the students in each grade performed especially well and especially poorly. These analyses are based on all items given at each grade in each content area. A section at the end of the chapter describes the improvement in students' performance in each content area across the grades, based on an analysis of the percentages of students responding correctly to the subsets of items in each content area that were given at overlapping grades.

## Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government

Fourth graders performed well on the few questions they were asked that pertained to democratic principles and the

[10] Educational Testing Service. *Civics: United States Government and Politics Objectives, 1988 Assessment* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1987).

purpose of government. For example, 87 percent of these young students correctly identified the reasons for having certain laws. Sixty-nine percent recognized that laws can be changed.

Students in the upper grades appeared to have a strong understanding of certain democratic principles and purposes of government, but more limited understanding of others. Most recognized why it is advantageous to have more than one candidate in an election; approximately three-quarters of the eighth-grade students and 89 percent of the twelfth-grade students responded correctly to a question on this topic. However, only 35 percent of the younger students and 61 percent of the older students recognized that having more than one political party was a fundamental difference between the United States and the Soviet Union. Half of the eighth graders and 64 percent of the twelfth graders were aware that the United States is a representative democracy.

A majority of the students in the upper grades appeared to be cognizant of some of the powers of Congress. For example, 63 percent of the eighth graders and 82 percent of the twelfth graders were aware that Congress could not establish a national church, and 69 percent and 85 percent, respectively, recognized that Congress could not pass a law curtailing the freedom of the press.

Although high percentages of the students in grades 8 and 12 — 73 percent and 91 percent, respectively — identified the purposes of most of the rights written into the Constitution, fewer seemed acquainted with Constitutional principles. For example, only 33 percent of the eighth graders and 44 percent of the twelfth graders recognized the purpose of the supremacy clause.

Although a variety of factors are likely to influence students' performance in this and other content areas, one factor that would seem to limit students' understanding of democratic principles and the purpose of government is their apparent lack of familiarity with the founding documents of our nation. This problem is made explicit by the responses to a question that asked students to identify the source of the famous quotation, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...." Only 47 percent of eighth graders and 57 percent of the twelfth graders associated this quotation with the Declaration of Independence. Similarly, many students seemed to have difficulty understanding the meaning of particular historical quotations. When asked to interpret a statement by James Madison on the need for an informed electorate from the Federalist Papers, just 43 percent of the eighth graders and 69 percent of the twelfth graders answered correctly.

## Structures and Functions of Political Institutions

One indication of students' understanding of our political system is the extent to which they know the proper functions and responsibilities of different political institutions. As early as grade 4, most students appeared to be familiar with the basic responsibilities of local government. For example, these young students generally recognized that local governments do not clean houses for people (83 percent responded correctly) but do take care of parks (78 percent) and clean streets (76 percent). At the eighth-grade level, over 90 percent of the students answered these questions correctly.

Fourth graders demonstrated some knowledge of political institutions beyond their immediate communities, but this knowledge seemed fragmented. For example, most students in grade 4 appeared to know that a major function of the U.S. government is to make laws (83 percent), but only approximately half (53 percent) were aware that the national government makes laws for the whole country. Approximately 90 percent of the fourth graders recognized that if the president of the country dies, the vice-president assumes the office, but only 45 percent were aware that the presidential term is four years. And while 90 percent of these young students knew that judges preside over courtrooms, only half were aware that mayors usually preside over cities.

By the time they reached the eighth grade, most students were familiar with many of the specific responsibilities of local government as well as the broad range of federal, state, and local government responsibilities. For example, most eighth graders recognized that roads (78 percent) and police stations (83 percent) were operated by some level of government.

Eighth and twelfth graders' understanding of the unique functions of the federal government appeared to be limited, however. Three-quarters of the eighth-grade students recognized that the federal government does not provide jobs for everyone, while 58 percent were aware that it regulates food and drugs, half recognized it helps farmers with money and services, and just 29 percent were aware that it helps individuals buy houses and start businesses. More than three-quarters of the twelfth graders knew that the U.S. government does not provide jobs for all citizens (83 percent) and that it does regulate food and drugs (82 percent) and help farmers (73 percent). Yet just 35 percent were aware that the U.S. government provides support for housing and small businesses.

Across the grades, students demonstrated an uneven knowledge of judicial powers. Approximately two-thirds of the eighth graders and 78 percent of the twelfth graders seemed to know that courts in this country cannot declare war, and 75 percent and 89 percent, respectively, were aware that the courts can decide whether an employee has been the victim of sex discrimination. At the other end of the spectrum, however, only 17 percent of the fourth graders and 41 percent of the eighth graders recognized that the Supreme Court has the power to declare a law unconstitutional.

Most students in grades 8 and 12 appeared to be familiar with the structure of the U.S. Congress. For example, 60 percent of the eighth-grade students recognized that senators are part of the legislative branch of government, while 56 percent of the eighth graders and 77 percent of the twelfth graders were aware that Congress consists of the House and Senate. They seemed to be less familiar with the scope of Congressional powers, however. Just 38 percent of the students in grade 8 were aware that Congress makes laws, and only 34 percent knew that it can double the income tax. Even at grade 12, the percentage of students providing the correct answer to the latter question was only 39 percent. Slightly more than one-third (37 percent) of the eighth-grade students and 45 percent of the twelfth-grade students responded correctly to a question that asked them where the qualifications for serving in Congress were specified.

TABLE 4.1 presents information on eighth- and twelfth-grade students' performance on an open-ended task designed to measure their understanding of the executive branch. Students

TABLE 4.1 Students' Performance on the "Presidential Responsibilities" Task, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| SCORE DEFINITION | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
|---|---|---|
| ELABORATED<br>Provides a thoughtful response with a mix of specific examples and discussion | 7.3 | 19.0 |
| ADEQUATE<br>Provides one or two examples of responsibilities with little discussion | 34.0 | 40.0 |
| MINIMAL<br>Answers in generalities or provides a list of responsibilities that contains errors | 49.9 | 34.6 |
| UNACCEPTABLE<br>Digresses from the topic, provides incorrect information, or does not attempt to list responsibilities | 8.8 | 6.4 |

were asked to name the current president and given 15 minutes to write a description of his primary responsibilities. Most students — 89 percent of the eighth graders and 94 percent of the twelfth graders — correctly identified Ronald Reagan as the then-current president. However, students appeared to find it more difficult to describe the president's responsibilities in writing. The table presents a condensed version of the guidelines used to evaluate students' responses and the percentages of students who received each score.

Just 7 percent of the eighth graders wrote elaborated responses to the question on presidential responsibilities, while nearly one-fifth of the twelfth graders did so. The following are examples of elaborated papers.

*The most important responsibility of the President is to govern and oversee the events of the government while keeping the people in mind. It is his responsibility to ensure that all actions taken by the government and that all laws made protect the rights and interests of the American people. It is, more specifically, his responsibility to conduct foreign relations properly in order to ensure harmony between the United States and other countries in order to protect the welfare of the American citizens. The President must not rely wholly on himself and his knowledge; he must be able to use his cabinet in order to keep a constant flow of new ideas and also to remain in touch with the concerns of the people. The office of President is a very important position. I believe that the President must always consider the American citizens in order to be successful. The rights of the people must <u>always</u> be protected. (Grade 12)*

*He has the power to veto a bill. If the house or senate passes a bill it goes to the President, he then can veto it or he can hold it for ten days and this makes a pocket veto. He serves as secretary of war and he greets foreign visitors when they come over here to the United States. He has the power to declare war, if he feels it would be in the best interest of the United States. The President has the power to appoint judges to the Supreme Court. He serves also as a spokesperson for foreign affairs. These are some things the President has power to do. (Grade 12)*

*His duties are to be the spokesperson for the United States, he is Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and he has the power to accept or veto proposed bills that are passed to him from Congress. The President also has the power to appoint his own cabinet members and top White House clerks. Supreme Court Justices are appointed by the President of the U.S., with the approval of the Senate. Referring back to my first point, if the President disapproves of a Bill*

*and vetos it, he must give Congress a statement as to why he vetoed the bill. The President is chosen to represent the U.S. with dignity and respect. He is a symbol of leadership that this nation can be proud to look up to. (Grade 12)*

Approximately one-third of the students in grade 8 and 40 percent of those in grade 12 wrote responses to the question that were judged as adequate. The following are examples of such responses, which typically provided a brief list of responsibilities with little discussion.

*I think being a president has a lot of responsibilities. He or she has to keep peace between other countrys. They sometimes have to make up laws and get it passed. They also have to make long speeches on national t.v. and that takes a lot of self confedence. That is why I think it is hard to be a President. (Grade 8)*

*His jobs are to keep us out of wars, veto laws, decide what to do with the governments money. If we get into a war, he tells us what to do. Another important function is to appoint Supreme Court Judge. He has got to make the right decision for our country. He has to trade and meat with the other countries. So he really, basically controls the U.S. (Grade 8)*

*The president has many jobs to do as the president like passing laws if he likes them or vetoing them. But there aren't a lot of things he can't do like declare war. A president gets elected every four years and can serve two terms, our president now has served two terms already and cannot be elected again. He is considered cheif in command of all of the Armed Forces. But there are alot of things the president can't do without the Congress and all the other branches. (Grade 8)*

Half the students in grade 8 and approximately one-third of those in grade 12 wrote responses to the presidential responsibilities task that were rated as minimal. As demonstrated in the following examples, these papers tended to provide only general answers to the question.

*To me, I think the most important responsibilities that the President has is to make sure that there is peace here in the U.S. and to keep good relations with the other countries. I guess he just has to keep the country in order (legally) or else there's another scandal. Anyways, the President has to be able to look at both sides of the issue before he makes any decisions in everything that he has to decide upon. (Grade 12)*

*He has the greatest responsibility of anyone in our nation. He makes major decisions that effects us and our government. His job is very dangerous. But without one in control our country would be in trouble. Thanks to many of our presidents and government we've been out of war since world war II. The president cuts down on pollution and so forth in our country. We should respect this man for what he stands for. He represents the people of the United States. (Grade 12)*

*His purpose of being a president is to pass the laws and to abide by them. His purpose also is to try avoid wars and to govern the world, to make other citizens feel as tho the United States is a fair country, and as for me his final duties are to treat all men equal. (Grade 8)*

*The president has many very important responsibilities. The president has to run the country, deal with other countries and keep out of trouble. Reagan has done a good job forming relationships (good) with Russia. But however he can't keep out of trouble. (Grade 8)*

Nine percent of the eighth graders and 6 percent of the twelfth graders wrote responses to the question that were considered unacceptable because they provided incorrect information, were incoherent, or digressed from the topic at hand. The following is an example of an unacceptable paper.

*He could try to get home that we live on the street and could try get jobs. If I was president, I get people the street get them job and new clothes and a house. And then my mother will be proud of me. (Grade 8)*

In summary, 41 percent of the eighth-grade students and 59 percent of the twelfth-grade students produced responses to the question on presidential responsibilities that were judged adequate or better. The remaining papers were considered too vague or too flawed to be considered better than minimally acceptable. Thus, it appears that many students were either unfamiliar with the detailed powers and responsibilities of the president or limited in their ability to express what they did know in writing.

## Political Processes

Students' knowledge of political processes in this country can best be understood by examining their responses to questions on political parties, elections, citizen action, and the legislative process. In all of these areas, there were notable strengths and weaknesses in students' knowledge.

Virtually all (98 percent) of the fourth-grade students were aware that people choose the president, and 69 percent appeared to know that one must be a citizen to vote. By eighth grade, 87 percent of the students recognized that citizenship was a requirement for voting and 80 percent knew that a secret ballot is used to cast votes for public officials. Approximately three-quarters (78 percent) of the fourth-grade students and nearly all of the eighth graders (93 percent) were able to use a sample ballot to match a candidate with the office for which she or he was running; 67 and 82 percent, respectively, used the ballot to identify the number of persons running for a specific office.

When asked to identify legal ways of influencing decision making other than voting, relatively few of the students in grade 4 recognized that striking (35 percent) and boycotting (19 percent) were legal avenues of protest. Eighth graders were far more likely to be familiar with these approaches, as 80 percent and 64 percent, respectively, were acquainted with the meaning of the terms striking and boycotting.

Twelfth-grade students were also familiar with some of the most common ways that American citizens can legitimately oppose laws or actions they believe to be unjust. The most widely recognized means of protest, identified by 91 percent or more of the twelfth graders, were writing a letter to a political representative or expressing one's views to the media. And virtually all of the twelfth-grade students recognized that disobeying laws and refusing to pay taxes were illegal means of protest (95 and 94 percent, respectively). At the same time, less than two-thirds of twelfth graders were aware that it is legal to organize a recall election, participate in a boycott, engage in a hunger strike, or impeach legislators.

Although most students in grades 8 and 12 exhibited a knowledge of which officials are elected and which are appointed, they appeared to have a less developed understanding of political processes. Approximately half of the eighth graders (53 percent) and three-quarters of the twelfth graders were aware that an election in which political party members choose their party's candidates is known as a primary election. However, only 36 percent of the eighth graders and 57 percent of the twelfth graders recognized that the presidential candidate for each major political party is formally nominated by a national convention.

Less than half (42 percent) of the students in grade 8 and 63 percent of those in grade 12 appeared to be familiar with the steps a bill must follow to become a law. Similarly, when given a chart of the process by which a bill becomes a law, just 54 percent of the eighth graders and 70 percent of the twelfth graders were able to use it to identify when a bill is referred to committee. Slightly more than

one-third (36 percent) of the eighth graders and half (54 percent) of the twelfth graders recognized that when the president vetos a bill, a two-thirds vote in both houses is required to override that veto. Finally, 27 percent of the eighth-grade students and 45 percent of the twelfth-grade students were aware that a treaty is valid only if ratified by the Senate.

Relatively few students appeared to have an understanding of checks and balances and the separation of powers. Only 35 percent of the fourth-grade students and 58 percent of the eighth-grade students selected the correct definition of separation of powers. Similarly, 36 percent of the eighth graders and 55 percent of the twelfth graders recognized that presidential veto, congressional override, and Supreme Court decisions were examples of the federal system of checks and balances.

### Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law

As with the content dimensions previously discussed, students' understanding of rights, responsibilities, and the law was adequate in some areas but limited in others. Students appeared to be particularly well informed of the rights of individuals who are arrested. For example, three-quarters of the fourth graders recognized that an arrested person does not have the right to escape. At grade 8, 92 percent of the students recognized that accused persons have the right to know what they are accused of, and 84 percent knew they have the right to remain silent.

By the time they reached the twelfth grade, 98 percent of the students appeared to know that accused persons have the right to a lawyer and 90 percent were aware that they cannot be arrested without evidence. Fifty-eight percent of the eighth-grade students and 79 percent of the twelfth-grade students recognized that an individual can be convicted of a crime only if proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Approximately two-thirds or more of the students in the upper grades demonstrated an awareness of other rights, such as freedom of speech. Seventy-one percent of the students in grade 8 and 84 percent of those in grade 12 recognized that a policeman can do nothing to a person who is criticizing the United States unless that person breaks a law. Further, 64 percent of the eighth graders and 77 percent of the twelfth graders were aware that freedom of speech has certain limits. Similar percentages of students recognized that different types of interest groups have the right to address an audience.

Students tended to perform less well on items that asked them to identify the historic documents in which particular rights are specified — including such documents as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and its amendments, state constitutions, and laws. Only 53 percent of the students in grade 8 and 57 percent of those in grade 12 were aware that the Declaration of Independence states that individuals have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And just 44 percent of the eighth graders and 51 percent of the twelfth graders seemed to know that the right to religious freedom is found in the amendments to the Constitution.

## Content-Area Knowledge Across the Grades

The previous sections have provided a detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in students' knowledge and understandings in each content area. TABLE 4.2 summarizes the average percentage of students in each grade who gave correct responses to the questions in each content area.[11]

TABLE 4.2 Average Percentage of Students Responding Correctly to Civics Questions in Each Content Area, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | AVERAGE PERCENTAGE CORRECT | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
| **DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT** | | | |
| All items given at a grade | 77.7 (0.7) [2 items] | 56.5 (0.5) [14 items] | 61.4 (0.6) [19 items] |
| Items given at grades 8 and 12 [12 items] | ——— | 50.7 (0.5) | 68.0 (0.6) |
| **STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS** | | | |
| All items given at a grade | 62.3 (0.6) [25 items] | 58.5 (0.4) [63 items] | 63.6 (0.6) [60 items] |
| Items given at grades 4 and 8 [16 items] | 58.5 (0.6) | 77.3 (0.5) | ——— |
| Items given at grades 8 and 12 [37 items] | ——— | 52.2 (0.5) | 67.8 (0.6) |
| **POLITICAL PROCESSES** | | | |
| All items given at a grade | 59.5 (0.6) [8 items] | 58.5 (0.5) [34 items] | 64.5 (0.5) [37 items] |
| Items given at grades 4 and 8 [6 items] | 52.6 (0.7) | 81.1 (0.7) | ——— |
| Items given at grades 8 and 12 [28 items] | ——— | 54.3 (0.5) | 70.9 (0.6) |
| **RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND THE LAW** | | | |
| All items given at a grade | 59.6 (0.6) [13 items] | 67.0 (0.4) [39 items] | 78.9 (0.5) [28 items] |
| Items given at grades 4 and 8 [12 items] | 58.2 (0.6) | 75.4 (0.6) | ——— |
| Items given at grades 8 and 12 [21 items] | ——— | 62.4 (0.5) | 77.7 (0.5) |
| **TOTAL ASSESSMENT** | 61.7 (0.5) [48 items] | 60.5 (0.4) [150 items] | 66.5 (0.5) [144 items] |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the percentage of students responding correctly to the set of items of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

[11] The average percentage correct figures were calculated as follows. The items were classified into the four categories identified in Table 4.2. Within each category, the percentages of students who responded correctly to each item were summed and then divided by the number of items in the category.

In each content area, as might be expected, the percentage of students responding correctly to the common items increased across the grades. That is, eighth graders were more likely than fourth graders to provide correct responses to items given at those two grades, and twelfth graders were more likely than eighth graders to give correct responses to items administered at grades 8 and 12.

## Summary

It is evident that students possess a range of knowledge and understandings in each of the four content areas included in the 1988 civics assessment: Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government; Structures and Functions of Political Institutions; Political Processes; and Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law. As anticipated, the depth and breadth of students' performance in each content area grew as they progressed through school. However, even by the twelfth grade, students' civics achievement remained quite limited in many respects. Most students performed poorly on items that referred to technical vocabulary, detailed political processes, or the historical and intellectual traditions of our government.

While it is difficult to identify precisely the experiences that contribute to students' knowledge, it is likely that out-of-school experiences such as discussing current events with parents or watching television have provided students with some information about civics — for example, information about political parties and elections or about the rights of accused persons.

CHAPTER FIVE

# Amount of Civics Instruction and Course Taking

PREVIOUS CHAPTERS have provided clear evidence that as students progress through the grades, their civic knowledge and understandings become deeper, richer, and more refined. Their ability to manipulate and apply what understandings they possess becomes more sophisticated. To make sense of how this growth occurs, it is necessary to move from describing what students know to considering their educational experiences.

Like proficiency in any content area, civics proficiency should be intimately related to the extent, nature, and scope of students' instructional experiences. To learn more about what is taught at various grades, NAEP asked students participating in the 1988 assessment a series of questions about their social studies and government classes. This chapter describes the amount of instruction students reported receiving in these subject areas, while the following chapter discusses the topics studied and instructional approaches used in these classes.

Although the NAEP results frequently reveal relationships between particular instructional variables and students' proficiency, causes and effects cannot be determined from these survey data. In addition, data reported by students — particularly by young students — may be of questionable accuracy. With these points in mind, the self-reported background information provided in these chapters and the relationships found between instruction and proficiency can help educators and policy makers to consider salient concerns and initiate further inquiries.

## Frequency of Social Studies Instruction: Grade 4

TABLE 5.1 summarizes the frequency of social studies classes reported by fourth-grade students and the average civics proficiency for each group. Nearly half of these young students reported that they had social studies instruction every day, while one-quarter reported studying the subject three or four times a week. At the other end of the spectrum, 8 percent of these young students reported that they never or hardly ever had social studies lessons.

TABLE 5.1 Average Civics Proficiency by Frequency of Social Studies Classes at Grade 4, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| FREQUENCY OF CLASSES | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
|---|---|---|
| Every day | 46.1 | 214.0 (1.3) |
| 3 or 4 times a week | 26.2 | 221.1 (1.3) |
| 1 or 2 times a week | 14.7 | 212.4 (2.1) |
| Less than once a week | 5.0 | 204.5 (5.3) |
| Never or hardly ever | 8.0 | 200.9 (2.4) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

Fourth graders who reported having social studies instruction less than once each week or hardly ever tended to perform less well in the assessment than students who received instruction more frequently.

When reflecting on the instructional experiences of students at a particular grade, it is important to know whether different subpopulations at that grade have comparable opportunities to study a given subject. TABLE 5.2 summarizes the amount of social studies instruction reported by fourth-grade students who belong to demographic subpopulations of interest.

There were essentially no differences between fourth-grade boys and girls in the reported frequency of social studies

TABLE 5.2

## Differences in Frequency of Social Studies Classes Across Demographic Subpopulations at Grade 4, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | EVERY DAY | 3 OR 4 TIMES A WEEK | 1 OR 2 TIMES A WEEK | LESS THAN ONCE A WEEK | NEVER OR HARDLY EVER |
| **GENDER** | | | | | |
| Male | 46.9 | 25.7 | 15.4 | 4.1 | 7.9 |
| Female | 45.4 | 26.7 | 14.0 | 5.9 | 8.0 |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | | | | | |
| White | 46.1 | 28.4 | 14.6 | 4.3 | 6.6 |
| Black | 47.7 | 19.3 | 14.7 | 6.6 | 11.7 |
| Hispanic | 43.0 | 24.6 | 15.1 | 6.5 | 10.7 |
| **REGION** | | | | | |
| Northeast | 32.0 | 28.1 | 23.7 | 9.3 | 6.9 |
| Southeast | 55.9 | 20.7 | 12.5 | 3.1 | 7.8 |
| Central | 49.8 | 30.6 | 11.8 | 2.2 | 5.6 |
| West | 45.4 | 25.8 | 12.0 | 5.7 | 11.1 |

instruction, but there were some disparities among White, Black, and Hispanic students. Eighty-nine percent of the White children reported having social studies instruction at least once a week, compared to 82 percent of the Black students and 83 percent of the Hispanic students at this grade.

Differences in the frequency of social studies instruction also were found across the four regions of the country. Fourth graders in the Southeast and Central regions appeared to receive the most frequent instruction in social studies, as more than three-quarters of the young students in these regions reported having a class at least three times each week. In contrast, students in the Northeast and West reported less frequent instruction. Just 60 percent of the fourth graders in the Northeast and 71 percent of those in the West reported that they had social studies class every day or almost every day.

**Regardless of their race/ethnicity, gender, or region, most eighth-grade students reported they had received American government or civics instruction in grade 5, 6, 7, or 8.**

### Exposure to American Government or Civics Instruction: Grade 8

To document their exposure to social studies instruction in middle or junior high school, eighth-grade students were asked if they had studied American government or civics in grades 5, 6, 7, or 8. Their responses to these questions were combined to provide information about the percentage of students who had instruction in at least one of these grades. TABLE 5.3 presents the results of these analyses with information on the average civics proficiency of each group.

Most (89 percent) of the eighth-grade students participating in the assessment reported they had studied American government or civics in fifth, sixth, seventh, or eighth grade. As might be expected, there was a marked difference in average civics proficiency between those who had studied the subject and those who had not.

To determine whether the disparities in instruction that appeared at grade 4

TABLE 5.3 Average Civics Proficiency by Exposure to American Government or Civics Instruction at Grade 8, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| Did you study American government or civics in fifth, sixth, seventh, or eighth grade? | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 88.6 | 262.7 (0.9) |
| No | 11.4 | 247.8 (1.9) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

were persisting at grade 8, NAEP studied the percentages of students in various subpopulations who had studied civics or government in the fifth, sixth, seventh, or eighth grades. TABLE 5.4 summarizes this information by gender, race/ethnicity, and region.

The disparities in social studies instruction that appeared at grade 4 seem to have been largely eliminated by grade 8. Regardless of their race/ethnicity, gender, or region, most eighth-grade students reported that they had received American government or civics instruction in grade 5, 6, 7, or 8.

TABLE 5.4 Exposure to American Government or Civics Instruction for Demographic Subpopulations at Grade 8, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

Did you study American government or civics in fifth, sixth, seventh, or eighth grade?

| | PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING "YES" |
|---|---|
| **GENDER** | |
| Male | 88.2 |
| Female | 89.1 |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | |
| White | 88.9 |
| Black | 88.5 |
| Hispanic | 86.6 |
| **REGION** | |
| Northeast | 92.1 |
| Southeast | 85.0 |
| Central | 87.8 |
| West | 89.9 |

### Amount of American Government or Civics Instruction: Grade 12

Twelfth-grade students who participated in the 1988 civics assessment were asked whether they had taken courses in American government in grade 9, 10, 11, or 12. Like the analyses performed at grade 8, twelfth-grade students' responses were combined to determine the percentages of students who had taken a course in this subject at any grade in high school. The results of these analyses are displayed in TABLE 5.5.

Nearly all of the twelfth graders — some 93 percent — reported that they had taken a civics or American government class in at least one grade in high

TABLE 5.5

## Average Civics Proficiency by Exposure to American Government or Civics Instruction at Grade 12, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| Did you study American government or civics in ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade? | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 93.4 | 298.3 (1.1) |
| No | 6.6 | 282.3 (2.5) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

school. And as expected, students who reported studying these subjects in high school tended to have higher civics proficiency, on average, than students who reported that they had not studied them.

TABLE 5.6 summarizes the differences in civics and government course taking for students belonging to various demographic subpopulations. Similar to the patterns observed at grades 4 and 8, White, Black, Hispanic, male, and female twelfth graders were equally likely to report having taken a high-school level course in civics or government.

TABLE 5.6

## Exposure to American Government or Civics Instruction for Demographic Subpopulations at Grade 12, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| Did you study American government or civics in ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade? | PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING "YES" |
|---|---|
| **GENDER** | |
| Male | 93.2 |
| Female | 93.5 |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | |
| White | 93.3 |
| Black | 95.0 |
| Hispanic | 93.0 |
| **REGION** | |
| Northeast | 85.5 |
| Southeast | 95.6 |
| Central | 96.3 |
| West | 95.8 |

There were differences in course taking across the four regions, however. Eighty-six percent of the students in the Northeast reported that they had studied civics or government in high school, compared with 96 percent of the students in each of the other regions.

A related question asked twelfth-grade students to report the total number of years of course work they had completed in American government or civics since grade 9. Their responses appear in TABLE 5.7.

Nearly two-thirds of the twelfth-grade students — some 63 percent — reported they had taken at least one year of course work in civics or American government since the ninth grade. It is not surprising to find that seniors who had studied these subjects for any amount of time performed better, on average, than students who had not. It is puzzling, however, that the amount of instruction received appeared to be unrelated to students' proficiency.

**Across the grades, there appears to be a positive relationship between students' average civics proficiency and the amount and frequency of instruction they received in social studies, civics, or American government.**

TABLE 5.7 Years of American Government or Civics Studies in High School, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | PER-CENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
|---|---|---|
| None | 7.9 | 277.3 (3.0) |
| Less than 1/2 year | 4.8 | 295.4 (4.2) |
| 1/2 year | 14.3 | 302.4 (2.2) |
| Between 1/2 year and 1 year | 10.6 | 299.2 (2.4) |
| 1 year | 22.6 | 296.2 (1.7) |
| More than 1 year | 39.9 | 297.9 (1.2) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

### Time Spent on Homework: Grade 12

The education research literature is full of statements, both normative and empirical, that indicate a positive relationship between the amount of time spent on homework and mastery of a subject. Accordingly, NAEP asked twelfth graders how much time they spent on homework for American government or civics class. As shown in TABLE 5.8, 10 percent indicated they had no homework and an additional 5 percent indicated that they did not do what homework was assigned.

Fifty-seven percent of the twelfth graders reported they spent no more than an hour on homework each week for their civics or government class. At the other end of the spectrum, just 15 percent of the students reported spending three hours or more on their civics or government homework each week. These students performed far better in the assessment than did students who said they spent less time on homework or did not have any homework assigned.

TABLE 5.8

## Average Civics Proficiency by Amount of Time Spent on American Government or Civics Homework Each Week at Grade 12, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| How much time have you usually spent each week on homework for your American government or civics class? | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
|---|---|---|
| I usually haven't had homework | 9.7 | 292.3 (3.2) |
| I have had homework, but I usually haven't done it | 5.2 | 287.9 (4.5) |
| 1 hour or less | 56.6 | 298.7 (1.0) |
| 2 hours | 13.2 | 302.9 (2.1) |
| 3 hours or more | 15.2 | 308.0 (2.3) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value. Note: This information is based on the responses of only those students who reported they had taken an American government or civics class.

## Summary

Across the grades, there appears to be a positive relationship between students' average civics proficiency and the amount and frequency of instruction they received in social studies, civics, or American government.

Most fourth graders (some 87 percent) reported having social studies instruction at least once each week, while students who stated they received instruction less than once a week were outperformed in the assessment by students who reported having more frequent instruction in the subject.

Eighty-nine percent of the eighth graders reported studying American government or civics in grade 5, 6, 7, or 8, and virtually all twelfth graders (93 percent) reported they had studied these subjects in high school. At both the eighth and twelfth grades, students who had studied civics or government outperformed their peers who had not done so.

The amount of homework assigned and completed did appear to be positively related to performance at grade 12. High-school seniors who reported spending four or more hours on homework each week tended to have substantially higher civics proficiency than their peers who reported spending less time on homework.

CHAPTER SIX

# Characteristics of Instruction and Topics Studied

TO MEASURE THE effectiveness of current approaches to civics instruction, educators need to consider not only the extent to which the subject is being taught, but also what is being taught, and how well. To address these questions, NAEP asked students participating in the 1988 assessment to report the civics topics they had studied and the types of instructional approaches used by their teachers. This chapter discusses students' instructional experiences and explores the relationships between these experiences and their civics proficiency. The information presented supplements other recent reports that have recommended substantive reforms in elementary and secondary social studies instruction.[12]

## Topics Studied in Social Studies Class: Grade 4

In 1988, 70 percent of the fourth-grade students reported they had studied about the government of our country in their social studies classes. These young students also were given a series of questions that asked if they had studied particular civic or government topics "a lot," "some," or "not at all." The topics ranged from communities to judges and courts. Students' responses to these questions appear in TABLE 6.1.

[12]National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, *Charting a Course: Social Studies for the 21st Century. A Report of the Curriculum Task Force of the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools* (November 1989).

TABLE 6.1

## Topics Addressed in Social Studies Class at Grade 4, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| In your social studies class, how much have you studied about... | PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS REPORTING EXTENT OF STUDIES | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | A LOT | SOME | NONE |
| How laws are made | 22.6 | 53.7 | 23.7 |
| Judges and courts | 7.9 | 34.3 | 57.8 |
| The president and the leaders of our country | 32.8 | 49.3 | 17.9 |
| Elections and voting | 14.8 | 50.3 | 34.9 |
| Your community | 45.5 | 42.1 | 12.4 |
| The rights and responsibilities of citizens | 29.6 | 47.4 | 23.0 |

Fourth graders reported studying a range of social studies topics. Most reported they had studied about the community (88 percent), presidents and leaders (82 percent), laws and citizens' rights (both 77 percent), and elections and voting (65 percent), at least to some extent. This information on what young students have studied reinforces the information on levels of civics proficiency presented earlier in this report. As discussed in Chapter Two, most fourth-grade students performed at Level 200, displaying a rudimentary awareness of civic life.

Fourth-grade students also were asked how often they discussed current events in their social studies classrooms, and over half (54 percent) reported doing so on a daily or weekly basis. These findings are presented in TABLE 6.2.

TABLE 6.2 | Discussion of Current Events in Social Studies Class at Grade 4, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| How often do you discuss current events in social studies class? | PERCENT |
|---|---|
| Almost every day | 20.6 |
| Once or twice a week | 33.0 |
| Once or twice a month | 16.0 |
| A few times a year | 12.2 |
| Never | 18.2 |

Nearly one-third of the fourth-grade students reported never or rarely discussing current events in their social studies class. This finding is particularly disappointing in view of the fact that the 1988 assessment occurred during an election year.

### Topics Studied in American Government and Civics Classes: Grades 8 and 12

Like the students in grade 4, those in the eighth and twelfth grades also were asked to report on the extent to which they had studied a variety of civics and civics-related topics. Their responses appear in TABLE 6.3.

Students in both grades reported studying a wide variety of topics in their civics and government classes. Almost all had studied the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, while other topics such as the Congress, the president and Cabinet, the ways in which laws are made, political parties, and rights and responsibilities of citizens also were commonly studied. Over half of the students at each grade reported receiving some instruction on the court system and almost one-third received a lot of instruction on this topic. Nearly three-quarters of the students in grade 8 (73 percent) reported they had studied about the principles of democratic government a lot or some, compared with 91 percent of the high-school seniors.

Because students at various grades appear to be studying many of the same topics, it is important for educators to examine what is being taught and how it is being taught. Repetitious instruction from one grade to the next may reduce the benefits of civics instruction — or, even worse, diminish students' interest in the subject. As an alternative, instructional approaches that build on students' existing knowledge and understandings from grade to grade, and that incorporate increasingly challenging analytic tasks, are more likely to sustain students' interest and maximize what they have studied in previous grades.

TABLE 6.3

## Civics Topics Studied at Grades 8 and 12, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| How much have you studied the following topics in American government or civics? | PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS REPORTING EXTENT OF STUDIES | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | A LOT | SOME | NONE |
| U.S. CONSTITUTION AND BILL OF RIGHTS | | | |
| Grade 8 | 55.7 | 39.9 | 4.4 |
| Grade 12 | 55.0 | 42.5 | 2.5 |
| CONGRESS | | | |
| Grade 8 | 41.7 | 50.3 | 7.9 |
| Grade 12 | 45.3 | 50.8 | 3.9 |
| HOW LAWS ARE MADE | | | |
| Grade 8 | 38.2 | 51.8 | 10.0 |
| Grade 12 | 42.6 | 52.6 | 4.7 |
| COURT SYSTEM | | | |
| Grade 8 | 29.6 | 52.7 | 17.6 |
| Grade 12 | 38.8 | 55.0 | 6.2 |
| PRESIDENT AND THE CABINET | | | |
| Grade 8 | 39.3 | 48.5 | 12.2 |
| Grade 12 | 39.6 | 55.8 | 4.6 |
| POLITICAL PARTIES, ELECTIONS, AND VOTING | | | |
| Grade 8 | 44.3 | 46.9 | 8.8 |
| Grade 12 | 45.0 | 51.1 | 3.9 |
| STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT | | | |
| Grade 8 | 30.0 | 55.0 | 15.0 |
| Grade 12 | 36.4 | 57.4 | 6.2 |
| PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT | | | |
| Grade 8 | 20.4 | 52.2 | 27.5 |
| Grade 12 | 32.0 | 59.2 | 8.8 |
| OTHER FORMS OF GOVERNMENT | | | |
| Grade 8 | 20.5 | 59.5 | 20.0 |
| Grade 12 | 26.2 | 66.2 | 7.6 |
| RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS | | | |
| Grade 8 | 42.8 | 44.7 | 12.5 |
| Grade 12 | 44.6 | 50.6 | 4.8 |

### Relationship Between Topics Studied and Civics Proficiency

To provide a sense of the relationship between students' exposure to various topics and their average civics proficiency, NAEP aggregated students' responses to the entire series of questions asked about topics at each grade. TABLE 6.4 compares the percentages of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 who (on average) cited a lot, some, and no study of civics topics, and cites their average civics proficiency.

Most of the students at each grade level reported studying a variety of civics topics "a lot" or "some." At the other end of the spectrum, 17 percent of the fourth graders, 8 percent of the eighth graders, and 3 percent of the twelfth graders had not studied any of the topics they were asked about.

At the fourth-grade level, there were essentially no differences in average proficiency according to students' exposure to various topics. At grades 8 and 12, the most proficient students reported that they had studied the range of civics topics a lot.

TABLE 6.4 Relationship Between Average Civics Proficiency and Study of Topics at Grades 4, 8, and 12, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | AVERAGE AMOUNT OF STUDY OF VARIOUS TOPICS | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | A LOT | SOME | NONE |
| **GRADE 4** | | | |
| Percent | 19.3 | 64.1 | 16.6 |
| Average Proficiency | 213.3 (2.0) | 214.6 (1.0) | 212.9 (2.3) |
| **GRADE 8** | | | |
| Percent | 30.8 | 61.2 | 8.0 |
| Average Proficiency | 265.9 (1.2) | 259.6 (0.9) | 238.8 (2.3) |
| **GRADE 12** | | | |
| Percent | 41.4 | 55.3 | 3.2 |
| Average Proficiency | 303.3 (1.2) | 293.7 (1.2) | 260.1 (4.9) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## Characteristics of Civics Instruction: Grades 8 and 12

The instructional approaches used in teaching civics are likely to exert considerable influence on the nature and extent of students' learning. To build an understanding of some of the ways in which civics is currently being taught in the schools, NAEP asked students in grades 8 and 12 about the kinds of approaches their teachers used in social studies, civics, or government classes. TABLE 6.5 displays the frequency of various instructional approaches reported.

Reading a textbook appears to be the most common mode of instruction by far, as 90 percent of the eighth graders and 87 percent of the twelfth graders reported being asked to read material in their textbooks either daily or weekly. Further, 38 percent of the eighth-grade students and 45 percent of the twelfth-grade students reported frequently being asked to read material not in the textbook. Nearly half of the students in each grade were expected to memorize information they had read on a daily or weekly basis.

Despite the frequency of reading reported by students, the amount of reading done may actually be quite low. As seen in Chapter Three, half or more of the students in each grade reported they read no more than 10 pages a day for all school subjects combined.

Most of the eighth- and twelfth-grade students — 83 percent and 84 percent, respectively — reported having opportunities either daily or weekly to discuss and analyze what they had read for social studies or civics class. Further, 68 percent of the eighth graders and 80 percent of the twelfth graders reported that they discussed current events in class this often. Many students also reported that taking tests or quizzes, writing short answers to questions, and giving talks about what they were studying were common activities.

TABLE 6.5

## Instructional Approaches Used in Government or Civics Classes at Grades 8 and 12, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| How often does your teacher ask you to do the following things for class? | PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | DAILY OR WEEKLY | MONTHLY | YEARLY OR NEVER |
| READ MATERIAL FROM YOUR TEXTBOOK | | | |
| Grade 8 | 90.0 | 5.4 | 4.7 |
| Grade 12 | 86.8 | 7.7 | 5.6 |
| READ MATERIAL NOT IN YOUR TEXTBOOK | | | |
| Grade 8 | 37.7 | 28.0 | 34.3 |
| Grade 12 | 44.5 | 26.8 | 28.7 |
| MEMORIZE THE MATERIAL YOU HAVE READ | | | |
| Grade 8 | 45.7 | 20.8 | 33.5 |
| Grade 12 | 44.7 | 21.9 | 33.4 |
| DISCUSS AND ANALYZE THE MATERIAL YOU HAVE READ | | | |
| Grade 8 | 83.3 | 8.3 | 8.4 |
| Grade 12 | 84.2 | 9.5 | 6.2 |
| WRITE SHORT ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS | | | |
| Grade 8 | 70.8 | 17.6 | 11.6 |
| Grade 12 | 68.4 | 20.0 | 11.7 |
| WRITE A REPORT OF THREE OR MORE PAGES | | | |
| Grade 8 | 9.8 | 28.3 | 61.9 |
| Grade 12 | 12.0 | 31.0 | 57.0 |
| WORK ON A GROUP PROJECT | | | |
| Grade 8 | 13.4 | 26.9 | 59.7 |
| Grade 12 | 17.3 | 31.0 | 51.8 |
| GIVE TALKS ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE STUDYING | | | |
| Grade 8 | 62.4 | 13.0 | 24.6 |
| Grade 12 | 51.3 | 14.7 | 34.0 |
| DISCUSS CURRENT EVENTS | | | |
| Grade 8 | 67.5 | 18.0 | 14.6 |
| Grade 12 | 80.0 | 12.2 | 7.8 |
| TAKE A TEST OR QUIZ | | | |
| Grade 8 | 69.1 | 27.3 | 3.5 |
| Grade 12 | 77.8 | 19.9 | 2.3 |

Note: At grade 12, the results are presented for only those students who reported they had taken an American government or civics class.

## Relationship Between Civic Participation and Proficiency: Grade 12

In addition to being asked to describe the instructional activities used by their teachers in American government or civics class, twelfth-grade students were asked to report how often they had participated in mock elections, government bodies, or trials. Their responses are presented in TABLE 6.6.

Relatively few high-school seniors reported they had participated many times in the types of civic activities listed. Yet those who had (12 percent) tended to perform better in the assessment than their peers who had occasionally or never participated in these activities.

TABLE 6.6

### Relationship Between Average Civics Proficiency and Participation in Civic Activities at Grade 12, 1988

| How often have you participated in mock or imitation elections, governmental bodies (like a council, legislature, or Congress), or trials? | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
|---|---|---|
| Several times | 11.6 | 311.6 (2.0) |
| Once or twice | 36.3 | 303.2 (1.2) |
| Never | 52.1 | 288.9 (1.4) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

### Relationship Between Civic Attitudes and Proficiency: Grade 12

Students in grade 12 were asked two questions designed to solicit their views on the issue of government responsiveness. TABLE 6.7 relates students' responses to these questions to their performance in the assessment.

Most twelfth-grade students (90 percent) stated they believed that elections help to make the government at least somewhat attentive to the issues and concerns that matter to citizens. Yet a smaller percentage — approximately three-quarters — agreed that the government has been somewhat or very responsive to citizens' views over the years. Students who appeared to have more favorable attitudes toward the responsiveness of the government tended to have higher proficiency than their more pessimistic peers.

TABLE 6.7

## Relationship Between Average Civics Proficiency and Views on Civic Issues at Grade 12, 1988

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | PERCENT | AVERAGE PROFICIENCY |
|---|---|---|
| **How much do you feel that having elections makes the government pay attention to what people think?** | | |
| A good deal | 43.4 | 303.7 (1.2) |
| Some | 46.4 | 294.6 (1.3) |
| Not much | 10.1 | 279.3 (2.7) |
| **Over the years, how much attention do you feel the government pays to what people think when it decides what it wants to do?** | | |
| A good deal | 17.0 | 305.5 (2.1) |
| Some | 59.9 | 299.5 (1.2) |
| Not much | 23.1 | 284.3 (1.8) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## Summary

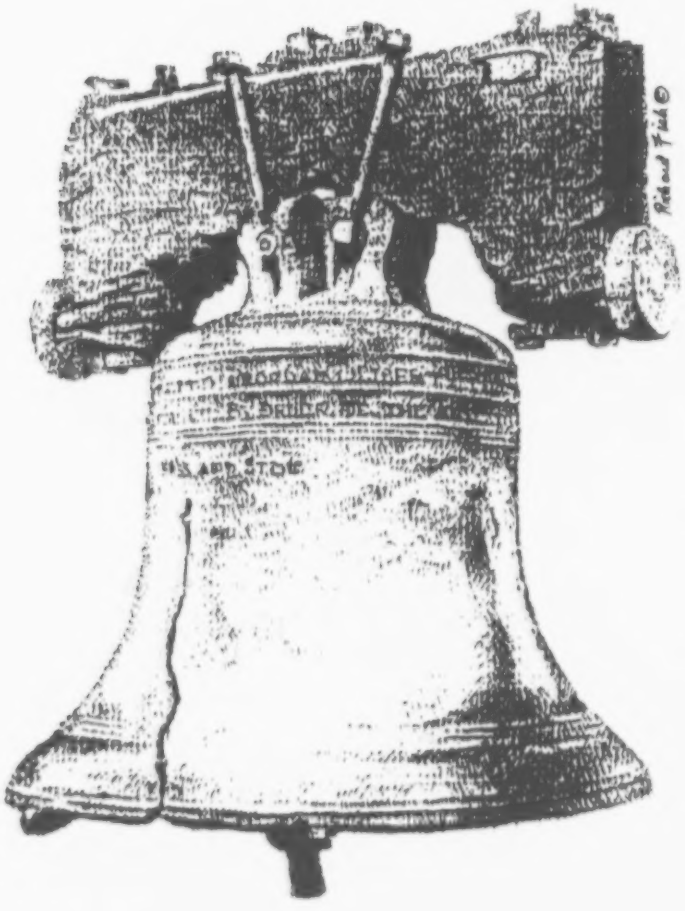
Fourth-grade students reported that they had studied about the community, presidents and leaders, laws, citizens' rights, and elections and voting in their social studies classes. Over half reported they discussed current events at least once a week in class.

Students in the eighth and twelfth grades reported studying a range of different topics, but the amount of time spent on various topics was more similar than dissimilar across the grades. The topic most often studied by eighth and twelfth graders alike was the Constitution, while the Congress, the legislative process, the president and Cabinet, political parties, and rights and responsibilities also were commonly studied. Many students reported that they had studied the court system, state and local government, and other forms of government at least to some extent. More than one-quarter (28 percent) of the students in grade 8 said they had not studied about the principles of democratic government. At grade 12, 9 percent of the students reported not studying this topic.

At the fourth-grade level, there was little evidence of a relationship between students' average proficiency and the range of topics studied, but a positive relationship was apparent by grade 8. As expected, students in the upper grades who had studied a range of topics some or a lot tended to perform better in the assessment than students who had not studied various topics.

Of all the instructional approaches used by their teachers, reading from textbooks was the most commonly reported activity at both the eighth and twelfth grades. Other activities — such as writing papers and working on group projects — appeared to be far less common.

Relatively few of the high-school seniors had participated extensively in mock elections or trials or other activities of this nature, but those who had tended to outperform their peers. Most twelfth graders viewed the government as being at least somewhat responsive to citizens' thoughts and concerns, and these students demonstrated higher average proficiency than students who reported more negative attitudes.



# PROCEDURAL APPENDIX

## An Introduction to The Nation's Report Card

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), is an ongoing, congressionally mandated project established in 1969 to obtain comprehensive and dependable data on the educational achievement of American students. From its inception until 1980, NAEP conducted annual assessments of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds attending public and private schools, and it has carried out biennial assessments since then. It remains the only regularly conducted educational survey at the elementary-, middle-, and high-school levels. To date, approximately 1.5 million American students have participated in the NAEP assessments.

Across the years, The Nation's Report Card has evaluated students' proficiencies in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies, as well as literature, art, music, citizenship, computer competence, and career and occupational development. Several of these subjects have been assessed many times, permitting an analysis of trends in student achievement. In the 1987-88 school year, reading, writing, U.S. history, and geography were assessed, in addition to civics.

NAEP assessments are developed through a broad-based consensus process involving educators, scholars, and citizens representing many diverse constituencies and points of view. The 1988 civics trend assessment was composed of items selected from the 1976 and 1982 assessments, while the 1988 grade-level civics assessment involved a comprehensive development effort. A panel of ex-

perts developed the objectives for the new assessment, proposing goals that it felt students should achieve in the course of their education.[13] After extensive reviews, the objectives were given to item writers who developed assessment questions to fit the specifications set forth in the objectives. In addition to a set of general background questions given to all students and to the cognitive questions on civics, a limited set of subject-area background questions was developed to provide a basis for examining policy-relevant issues. These civics background questions asked students for information on the amount and nature of the instruction they had received in social studies and government, as well as on their education-related activities.

All items for the 1988 assessment — cognitive and background alike — underwent intensive reviews by subject-matter and measurement specialists and by sensitivity reviewers whose purpose was to eliminate any material potentially biased or insensitive toward particular groups. The items were then field-tested, revised, and administered to a stratified, multistage probability sample selected so that the assessment results could be generalized to the national population.

Following each NAEP assessment, the results are published in reports that describe patterns and trends in achievement in a given subject area. The NAEP reports are widely disseminated to legislators, educators, and others concerned with improving education in this country.

The Nation's Report Card is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and directed by the National Center for Education Statistics. Educational Testing Service has been the grantee for the project since 1983. Earlier assessments were conducted by the Education Commission of the States. NAEP is governed by the National Assessment Governing Board, an independent, legislatively defined board.

## Overview of the Civics Trend Assessment at Ages 13 and 17, 1976 to 1988

Part I of this report summarized trends in the civics proficiency of American students at ages 13 and 17, based on three national civics assessments conducted during the school years ending in 1976, 1982, and 1988. The 1988 trend assessment of 13- and 17-year-olds was administered in a way that permitted linking the results to those from the 1976 and 1982 civics assessments. Thus, students in the 1988 civics trend (or "bridge") samples were the same age as students who had participated in the earlier assessments, and were administered a set of the same assessment materials at the same time of year and using the same methods used in 1976 and 1988. In all three assessment years, 13-year-olds were evaluated in the fall (October to December) and 17-year-olds in the spring (March to May). At both ages, the trend assessments were conducted using a tape recording that paced students as they responded to the background and cognitive questions.

[13] Educational Testing Service, *Civics: United States Government and Politics Objectives, 1988 Assessment* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1988).

The students sampled to participate in the trend assessments were assembled for an assessment session that lasted for approximately one hour. Each student received a booklet that contained a set of general background questions and a set of cognitive items on various civics topics. Across the entire set of booklets, 96 cognitive questions were administered at age 13 and 101 questions were administered at age 17.

## Overview of the 1988 Civics Assessment at Grades 4, 8, and 12

Part II of this report summarized performance results and background information from the 1988 civics assessment of students in grades 4, 8, and 12. This grade-level civics assessment was conducted from January through May 1988.

As previously described, the objectives for the grade-level civics assessment were developed using a broad-based consensus process involving university professors, classroom teachers, social science researchers, school administrators, and curriculum specialists. Three essential goals of civics education were defined in the objectives:

- developing students' understanding of the various contexts of American political life, including the home, school, community, state, nation, and world;
- developing the cognitive skills — such as knowing, understanding, and applying — that allow students to deal with particular civic facts, concepts, terminology, procedures, and ideas; and
- educating students in the content of civics, including the nature of democratic principles and the purpose of government; the structure and functions of political institutions; and rights, responsibilities, and the law.[11]

Each item in the assessment was classified into these dimensions, permitting the analysis of content-area performance discussed in Chapter 4. Forty-eight cognitive items were administered at grade 4, 150 items at grade 8, and 144 items at grade 12.

The overall composition of the 1988 assessment was based on a focused-BIB spiral matrix design whereby not all students respond to all items in the assessment. This enables broad coverage of the subject areas being assessed while minimizing the burden for any one student. Each assessment booklet required approximately an hour of students' time. Fourth-grade students were read two background questionnaires, requiring about 15 minutes, and then given 30 minutes to complete three 10-minute blocks of cognitive materials. Eighth- and twelfth-grade students had five minutes to complete each of the background questionnaires and were given 45 minutes to complete three 15-minute blocks of cognitive questions. Most of these questions were multiple choice, but one open-ended question was also included at grades 8 and 12.

At grade 4, the civics assessment consisted of three blocks of cognitive items, contained in one booklet. At grades 8 and 12, the balanced incomplete block or "BIB" part of the 1988 NAEP design

[11] Educational Testing Service. *Civics: United States Government and Politics Objectives, 1988 Assessment* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1987).

assigned the 7 blocks of civics items to booklets in such a way that each block appeared in three booklets and each pair of blocks appeared in one of the seven booklets. At all three grades, approximately 1,800 students answered each question. In the "spiralling" part of the BIB-spiralling method, the booklets were distributed to the assessment sessions in such a way that typically only a few students in any one session received the same booklet.

## Sampling, Data Collection, and Scoring

Sampling and data collection activities for the 1988 assessment were conducted by Westat, Inc. As with all NAEP assessments, the 1988 assessment was based on a deeply stratified, three-stage sampling design. The first stage involved stratifying primary sampling units (counties or aggregates of small counties) by region and community type and making a random selection. Second, within each selected unit, public and private schools were enumerated, stratified, and randomly selected. Finally, students were randomly selected from each school for participation in the assessment.

### Sampling for the Civics Trend Assessment

TABLE A.1 presents the student and school sample sizes and the school cooperation and student completion rates for each of the civics trend assessments.

### Sampling for the Grade-Level Civics Assessment

TABLE A.2 presents the student and school sample sizes for the 1988 grade-level civics assessment, as well as the school cooperation and student response rates.

### Data Collection and Scoring

All data were collected by a trained field staff. Some students sampled (less than 5 percent overall) were excluded from the assessment because of limited English proficiency or severe handicap. NAEP began collecting descriptive information on these excluded students in 1984.

Following each session, the assessment administrators sent completed materials back to ETS for processing. Responses to the open-ended questions included in the trend and 1988 civics assessments were scored by professional readers who were trained to use the evaluative criteria developed for each question. Twenty percent of the responses were scored twice to monitor interreader reliability, and the percentage of exact agreement between the first and second readers ranged from 89 to 100 percent across the items. The booklets were then scanned and information was transcribed to the NAEP data base. All data collection and processing activities were conducted with attention to rigorous quality control procedures.

TABLE A.1

## Student and School Sample Sizes for the Civics Trend Assessments

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | 1976 | 1982 | 1988 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **STUDENT SAMPLE SIZES** | | | |
| Age 13 | 19,952 | 7,268 | 1,938 |
| Age 17 | 17,866 | 6,751 | 1,786 |
| Total | 37,818 | 14,019 | 3,724 |
| **SCHOOL SAMPLE SIZES** | | | |
| Age 13 | 549 | 540 | 173 |
| Age 17 | 439 | 396 | 114 |
| Total | 988 | 936 | 441 |
| **PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING** | | | |
| Age 13 | — | 89.2 | 92.7 |
| Age 17 | — | 86.5 | 78.1 |
| **PERCENTAGE OF STUDENT COMPLETION** | | | |
| Age 13 | 87.7 | 85.5 | 90.0 |
| Age 17 | 86.5 | 74.2 | 78.7 |

Notes: The 1988 figures are from the **Report on Field Operations and Data Collection Activities for NAEP, Year 19** (1987-88), prepared by Westat, Inc. (1988). Figures for the 1976 and 1982 assessment are from the NAEP Technical Reports for those assessments. The decreased school sample sizes in 1988 reflect NAEP's procedure of using special bridge samples to measure trends. Although more schools and students participated in the full 1988 civics assessment (see Table A.2), the figures above are for the civics bridge samples upon which the trend report is based. Sampled schools that refused to participate were replaced, but the school cooperation rates were computed based on the schools originally selected for participation in the assessments. The student completion rates represent the percentage of students invited to be assessed who were assessed, including in follow-up sessions (when necessary).



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TABLE A.2

## Student and School Sample Sizes, School Cooperation and Student Completion Rates, 1988 Assessment

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| GRADES | STUDENT SAMPLE SIZE | SCHOOL SAMPLE SIZE | PERCENT OF SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING | PERCENT OF STUDENT COMPLETION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 1,974 | 327 | 88.7 | 92.8 |
| 8 | 4,487 | 399 | 86.6 | 87.8 |
| 12 | 4,275 | 304 | 82.8 | 78.5 |
| Total | 10,736 | 1,030 | | |

Note: These figures were obtained from the **Reports on NAEP Field Operation and Data Collection Activities,** prepared by Westat, Inc. Sampled schools that refused to participate were replaced, but the school cooperation rates were computed based on the schools originally selected for participation in the assessments. The student completion rates represent the percentage of students invited to be assessed who were assessed, including in follow-up sessions (when necessary).

### Data Analysis

After the data from the civics booklets were scored and scanned, they were weighted in accordance with the population structure. The weighting reflects the probability of selection of each student, adjusts for nonresponse, and, through poststratification, assures that the representation of certain subpopulations corresponds to figures from the Census and the Current Population Survey. (*The NAEP 1987-88 Technical Report* will provide further details on weighting and its effects on proficiency estimates.)

Two types of information were produced to summarize students' performance in the 1988 civics assessment. First, NAEP calculated the percentages of students who gave correct responses to the individual cognitive items and to subsets of these items (as discussed in Chapter 4). Because a nationally representative sample of students answered each question, these percentages are also available for subgroups of students as defined by region, gender, and race/ethnicity. Second, item response theory (IRT) technology was used to estimate average civics proficiency for the nation and various subpopulations of interest. IRT makes it possible to estimate performance for a group or subgroup even when all respondents did not answer all the questions in the pool. Using IRT methods, the percentages of students across the nation who performed at successive levels of proficiency also were estimated.

IRT defines the probability of answering an item correctly as a mathematical function of proficiency or skill. NAEP's estimated statistics describing national and subgroup proficiency are computed as expected values of the figures that would have been obtained had individual proficiencies been observed, given the data that were in fact observed — that is, responses to the cognitive and background items.[15]

[15]For theoretical justification of the procedures employed, see Robert J. Mislevy, *ETS Research Bulletin #88-54-ONR: Randomization-based Inferences About Latent Variables from Complex Samples* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 1988). For computational details, see *The NAEP 1987-88 Technical Report* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1990).

The main purpose of IRT analysis is to provide a common scale on which performance can be compared across groups (for example, ages or grades) and subgroups (for example, those defined by gender or race/ethnicity) whether assessed at the same time or a number of years apart. The NAEP proficiency scales also make it possible to examine relationships between student performance and a variety of background factors, relating achievement to one variable or composite variables. These analyses, however, do not reveal the underlying causes of these relationships, which may be influenced by a number of variables. Similarly, the assessments do not capture the influence of unmeasured variables. Therefore, the results are most useful when they are considered in combination with other knowledge about the student population and the educational system, such as trends in instruction, changes in the school-age population, and societal demands and expectations.

Because the trend and grade-level civics assessments used different administrative procedures and had different target populations, two separate proficiency scales were developed for use in reporting results from the two distinct parts of the assessment. Students at ages 13 and 17 were placed on a civics trend proficiency scale, ranging from 0 to 100, and those in grades 4, 8, and 12 were placed on a separate cross-sectional proficiency scale, ranging from 0 to 500. As noted in the body of the report, each scale was assigned a different metric because the results from the trend and grade-level assessments are not comparable.

## Estimating Variability in Proficiency Measures

Since the statistics presented in this report are estimates of population and subpopulation characteristics, rather than the actual (unknown) values of those characteristics, it is important to have measures of the degree of uncertainty of the estimates. Two components of uncertainty are accounted for in the standard errors based on the NAEP data: (1) uncertainty due to sampling variability and (2) uncertainty arising because scale scores for each respondent are based on a relatively small number of cognitive items.

The sampling variance provides a measure of the dependence of the results on the particular sample achieved. Because NAEP uses complex sampling procedures, conventional formulas for estimating sampling variability that assume simple random sampling are inappropriate. To account for the characteristics of its complex sample design, NAEP uses a jackknife replication procedure to estimate the sampling variability. Briefly, the jackknife procedure estimates the sampling variance of a statistic by repeatedly altering the sample in a controlled manner and recomputing the statistic based on the altered sample.[16] The jackknife variance estimate is based on the variability of the statistics from the altered samples. The square root of the jackknife variance estimate of a statistic is the sampling standard error of that statistic. This standard error includes all possible nonsystematic error associated with administering specific items to designated students in controlled situations.

[16]Eugene G. Johnson, "Considerations and Techniques for the Analysis of NAEP Data" *Journal of Educational Statistics*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (December 1989).

The jackknifed standard error provides a reasonable measure of uncertainty for any statistic based on values observed without error. Population scores for cognitive items meet this requirement, but scale-score proficiency values do not. Because each student typically responds to relatively few items, there exists a nontrivial amount of imprecision in the measurement of the proficiency values for any given student. This imprecision adds an additional component of variability to statistics based on scale-score proficiency values. This component is estimated by assessing the dependence of the value of the statistic on the particular set of student level estimated proficiencies used in its computation. The measure of the overall variability of a statistic based on scale scores is the sum of the component due to imprecision of measurement and the jackknife sampling variance. The standard error of the statistic is the square root of this sum. The estimated population mean ± 2 standard errors represents an approximate 95 percent confidence interval. It can be said with about 95 percent certainty that the average performance of the population of interest is within this interval.[17]

## NAEP Reporting Groups

NAEP reports performance for the nation and for groups of students defined by shared characteristics. In addition to national results, this report contains information about subgroups defined by region of the country, gender, and race/ethnicity. The following section defines these and other subpopulations referred to in this report.

### Region

The country has been divided into four regions: Northeast, Southeast, Central and West. States included in each region are shown on the following map.

### Gender

Results are reported for males and females.

### Race/Ethnicity

Results are presented for Black, White, and Hispanic students, based on students' identification of their race/ethnicity according to the following categories: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Other. Although the sample sizes were insufficient to permit separate reliable estimates for all subgroups defined by race/ethnicity, all students were included in computing the national estimates of average civics performance.

[17]For a complete description of NAEP variance estimation, see *The NAEP 1987-88 Technical Report* (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1990).

## Size and Type of Community

Three extreme community types of special interest are defined by an occupational profile of the area served by the school, as well as by the size of the community in which the school is located. This is the only reporting category that excludes a large number of respondents. About two-thirds do not fall into the classifications listed below. Results for the remaining two-thirds are not reported in this breakdown, since their performance was similar to that for the nation.

**Advantaged Urban Communities.** Students in this group attend schools in or around cities with a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are in professional or managerial positions.

**Disadvantaged Urban Communities.** Students in this group attend schools in or around cities with a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are on welfare or are not regularly employed.

**Rural Communities.** Students in this group attend schools in areas with a population below 10,000 where many of the residents are farmers or farm workers.

## Race/Ethnicity by Region and Advantaged/Disadvantaged Urban Communities

TABLE A.3 provides information on the cross-section between students' racial/ethnic characteristics and the regions in which they live and the types of communities in which they attend school.

TABLE A.3

## Distribution of White, Black, and Hispanic Students by Region and by Size and Type of Community

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

| | PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
| **GRADE 4** | | | |
| Total | 70.0 (0.9) | 15.6 (0.8) | 10.7 (0.6) |
| REGION | | | |
| Northeast | 76.6 (1.8) | 12.3 (1.7) | 8.1 (1.4) |
| Southeast | 59.0 (2.8) | 30.2 (2.9) | 7.3 (1.0) |
| Central | 81.6 (1.8) | 9.4 (2.3) | 6.3 (1.6) |
| West | 64.2 (2.3) | 10.4 (2.1) | 19.8 (1.7) |
| SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY | | | |
| Advantaged Urban | 76.8 (3.8)! | 5.9 (1.9)! | 11.6 (3.7)! |
| Disadvantaged Urban | 27.2 (6.0) | 46.4 (8.4) | 22.9 (4.6) |
| **GRADE 8** | | | |
| Total | 69.7 (0.6) | 15.5 (0.5) | 10.4 (0.4) |
| REGION | | | |
| Northeast | 72.8 (2.6) | 16.2 (2.0) | 7.0 (1.0) |
| Southeast | 68.2 (3.0) | 23.8 (2.5) | 5.7 (1.5) |
| Central | 76.3 (3.4) | 15.3 (2.9) | 5.8 (1.1) |
| West | 62.7 (1.9) | 7.7 (1.6) | 21.6 (1.2) |
| SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY | | | |
| Advantaged Urban | 72.7 (5.0)! | 10.6 (3.7)! | 11.3 (4.0)! |
| Disadvantaged Urban | 29.6 (6.3) | 42.3 (6.3) | 21.9 (3.9) |
| **GRADE 12** | | | |
| Total | 75.6 (0.8) | 11.8 (0.6) | 8.4 (0.4) |
| REGION | | | |
| Northeast | 80.1 (1.5) | 9.7 (1.5) | 6.6 (0.9) |
| Southeast | 72.8 (2.5) | 20.8 (2.2) | 4.6 (1.3) |
| Central | 82.7 (2.4) | 9.9 (2.1) | 5.1 (1.0) |
| West | 66.9 (2.4) | 8.1 (1.8) | 16.3 (1.8) |
| SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY | | | |
| Advantaged Urban | 83.8 (2.2) | 5.0 (1.5) | 4.3 (1.1) |
| Disadvantaged Urban | 26.3 (8.0) | 35.0 (6.9) | 35.6 (7.0) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. The "!" symbol indicates that the data should be interpreted with caution because the standard errors cannot be accurately estimated.

### Additional Background Factors

In addition to gathering information on students' gender, race/ethnicity, and the region in which they live, NAEP collects data from all students on a number of background questions, including the type of school program in which they are enrolled, the number and types of reading materials in the home, the highest level of parents' education, and the amount of time spent on homework. Students participating in the civics assessment were also asked a series of background questions specific to their civics course of study. To report students' responses to these questions in a useful way, NAEP has developed composite variables by analyzing students' responses to certain sets of the background questions.

# DATA APPENDIX

THE FOLLOWING DATA TABLES supplement the information provided in this report. The first section summarizes trends in average proficiency (on the 0 to 100 scale) for 13- and 17-year-old students from 1976 to 1988. Results are provided for the nation as well as for subpopulations defined by gender, race/ethnicity, region, and parents' level of education. Also included in this section are tables summarizing average proficiency means, standard deviations, and percentile distributions from the 1976, 1982, and 1988 trend assessments.

The second section of the Data Appendix provides detailed performance results from the 1988 assessment of students in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades. The initial tables in this section provide information on average civics proficiency and levels of proficiency (on the 0 to 500 scale) for the nation and subpopulations of interest. Tables presenting standard deviations and percentile distributions are also included. The final set of tables summarize the percentages of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students who responded correctly to each item included in the 1988 civics assessment, together with the average percentages of students who responded correctly to the items in each of the content areas defined in Chapter Four. These data are provided for the nation as well as for students belonging to various subpopulations defined by gender and race/ethnicity.

## TRENDS IN AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY AT AGES 13 AND 17: 1976 TO 1988

### AGE 13

| | AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1976 | 1982 | 1988 |
| **NATION** | 49.1 (0.2) | 49.1 (0.4) | 50.0 (0.4) |
| **GENDER** | | | |
| Male | 49.7 (0.2) | 50.1 (0.4) | 50.5 (0.6) |
| Female | 48.5 (0.3) | 48.2 (0.4)* | 49.5 (0.4) |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | | | |
| White | 50.7 (0.2) | 50.7 (0.3) | 51.2 (0.5) |
| Black | 42.1 (0.3)* | 42.0 (0.4)* | 45.7 (0.6) |
| Hispanic | 41.1 (0.6)* | 43.9 (0.5) | 45.5 (1.8) |
| **REGION** | | | |
| Northeast | 50.1 (0.4) | 51.2 (0.7) | 51.2 (0.6) |
| Southeast | 47.3 (0.6) | 47.2 (0.6) | 49.7 (1.4) |
| Central | 50.9 (0.4) | 49.3 (0.8) | 50.3 (0.8) |
| West | 47.7 (0.5) | 48.6 (0.6) | 48.9 (0.9) |
| **SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY** | | | |
| Advantaged urban | 55.0 (0.5) | 54.9 (0.6) | 52.6 (1.5) |
| Disadvantaged urban | 44.0 (0.9) | 43.9 (1.1) | 43.8 (0.9) |
| Other | 48.6 (0.2) | 49.1 (0.3) | 50.0 (0.6) |
| **PARENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION** | | | |
| Not graduated high school | 43.9 (0.3) | 43.3 (0.5) | 45.5 (1.1) |
| Graduated high school | 48.4 (0.3) | 48.1 (0.3) | 47.4 (0.5) |
| Some college | 53.0 (0.3) | 52.1 (0.4) | 52.4 (0.5) |

### AGE 17

| | AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1976 | 1982 | 1988 |
| **NATION** | 61.7 (0.3) | 61.3 (0.5) | 59.6 (0.5) |
| **GENDER** | | | |
| Male | 63.5 (0.3)* | 63.1 (0.6) | 61.2 (0.7) |
| Female | 60.0 (0.3)* | 59.6 (0.5) | 58.2 (0.6) |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | | | |
| White | 63.4 (0.3)* | 63.6 (0.4)* | 61.4 (0.6) |
| Black | 52.5 (0.5) | 51.6 (0.5) | 53.1 (1.0) |
| Hispanic | 51.5 (0.8) | 52.3 (1.2) | 53.8 (1.7) |
| **REGION** | | | |
| Northeast | 62.9 (0.5) | 62.3 (0.9) | 60.8 (1.2) |
| Southeast | 59.3 (0.4) | 59.8 (1.0) | 59.7 (0.7) |
| Central | 62.3 (0.4) | 62.8 (0.7) | 60.1 (1.4) |
| West | 61.7 (0.6)* | 60.1 (1.0) | 58.1 (1.1) |
| **SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY** | | | |
| Advantaged urban | 66.1 (0.8) | 69.4 (0.7) | 62.3 (0.9) |
| Disadvantaged urban | 56.3 (1.1) | 52.7 (0.8) | 50.0 (2.2) |
| Other | 61.7 (0.2) | 61.6 (0.5) | 59.2 (0.6) |
| **PARENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION** | | | |
| Not graduated high school | 55.4 (0.4)* | 53.7 (0.6) | 52.8 (1.1) |
| Graduated high school | 59.8 (0.3)* | 59.3 (0.5) | 55.6 (0.8) |
| Some college | 65.9 (0.3)* | 65.4 (0.5) | 62.5 (0.6) |

* Shows statistically significant difference from 1988 at the .05 level. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND PERCENTILE DISTRIBUTIONS WITH STANDARD ERRORS, AGE 13: 1976 to 1988

### AGE 13

| | | 1976 | 1982 | 1988 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TOTAL SAMPLE** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 49.1 (0.2) | 49.1 (0.4) | 50.0 (0.4) |
| Standard Deviation | | 9.5 (0.1) | 9.0 (0.1) | 10.0 (0.2) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 33.4 (0.4) | 34.1 (0.4) | 34.0 (0.7) |
| | 10 | 36.9 (0.3) | 37.6 (0.5) | 37.5 (0.7) |
| | 15 | 42.7 (0.3) | 43.1 (0.5) | 43.3 (0.4) |
| | 20 | 49.3 (0.3) | 49.2 (0.4) | 49.7 (0.5) |
| | 25 | 55.6 (0.3) | 55.2 (0.4) | 56.4 (0.7) |
| | 30 | 61.3 (0.3) | 60.5 (0.4) | 62.9 (0.9) |
| | 45 | 64.5 (0.3) | 63.7 (0.4) | 67.2 (1.5) |
| **MALE STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 49.7 (0.2) | 50.1 (0.4) | 50.5 (0.6) |
| Standard Deviation | | 9.6 (0.1) | 9.1 (0.2) | 10.4 (0.3) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 33.6 (0.4) | 35.0 (0.7) | 33.6 (0.9) |
| | 10 | 37.2 (0.3) | 38.3 (0.5) | 37.5 (0.9) |
| | 25 | 43.3 (0.3) | 43.9 (0.5) | 43.5 (0.6) |
| | 50 | 49.9 (0.3) | 50.1 (0.4) | 50.1 (0.7) |
| | 75 | 56.3 (0.3) | 56.3 (0.5) | 57.3 (0.5) |
| | 90 | 61.9 (0.3) | 61.8 (0.5) | 64.2 (0.9) |
| | 95 | 65.1 (0.4) | 65.0 (0.5) | 68.2 (1.0) |
| **FEMALE STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 48.5 (0.3) | 48.2 (0.4) | 49.5 (0.4) |
| Standard Deviation | | 9.4 (0.1) | 8.7 (0.2) | 9.6 (0.3) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 32.8 (0.5) | 33.4 (0.6) | 34.2 (0.9) |
| | 10 | 36.4 (0.4) | 36.8 (0.8) | 37.5 (1.1) |
| | 25 | 42.1 (0.3) | 42.4 (0.6) | 43.1 (0.4) |
| | 50 | 48.6 (0.3) | 48.5 (0.5) | 49.3 (0.4) |
| | 75 | 54.9 (0.4) | 54.2 (0.4) | 55.6 (0.5) |
| | 90 | 60.5 (0.4) | 59.3 (0.4) | 61.8 (1.0) |
| | 95 | 63.7 (0.4) | 62.1 (0.5) | 65.4 (1.9) |
| **WHITE STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 50.7 (0.2) | 50.7 (0.3) | 51.2 (0.5) |
| Standard Deviation | | 8.9 (0.1) | 8.4 (0.1) | 9.8 (0.3) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 36.1 (0.4) | 37.0 (0.4) | 35.5 (1.0) |
| | 10 | 39.3 (0.3) | 39.9 (0.4) | 39.0 (0.6) |
| | 25 | 44.7 (0.3) | 45.0 (0.4) | 44.6 (0.5) |
| | 50 | 50.8 (0.3) | 50.6 (0.4) | 50.8 (0.5) |
| | 75 | 56.8 (0.3) | 56.3 (0.4) | 57.4 (0.6) |
| | 90 | 62.2 (0.3) | 61.4 (0.4) | 64.1 (0.9) |
| | 95 | 65.2 (0.3) | 64.5 (0.5) | 68.2 (0.8) |
| **BLACK STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 42.1 (0.3) | 42.0 (0.4) | 45.7 (0.6) |
| Standard Deviation | | 8.8 (0.3) | 8.3 (0.2) | 8.6 (0.4) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 28.0 (0.7) | 28.4 (0.8) | 31.7 (1.0) |
| | 10 | 30.8 (0.5) | 31.4 (0.5) | 34.7 (1.4) |
| | 25 | 36.2 (0.6) | 36.3 (0.4) | 39.7 (0.8) |
| | 50 | 41.8 (0.4) | 42.1 (0.5) | 45.3 (0.7) |
| | 75 | 48.0 (0.5) | 47.8 (0.4) | 51.9 (0.8) |
| | 90 | 53.4 (0.4) | 52.7 (0.8) | 57.2 (1.0) |
| | 95 | 56.5 (0.4) | 55.7 (0.8) | 60.4 (1.1) |
| **HISPANIC STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 41.1 (0.6) | 43.9 (0.5) | 45.5 (1.8) |
| Standard Deviation | | 8.9 (0.2) | 8.4 (0.5) | 10.5 (0.9) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 26.9 (0.7) | 30.1 (1.3) | 28.8 (1.7) |
| | 10 | 29.8 (0.3) | 33.3 (1.0) | 32.0 (2.5) |
| | 25 | 34.9 (0.6) | 38.2 (0.5) | 38.7 (2.0) |
| | 50 | 40.9 (0.5) | 43.8 (1.0) | 45.3 (2.3) |
| | 75 | 47.2 (0.5) | 49.6 (1.0) | 51.7 (2.2) |
| | 90 | 52.6 (0.7) | 54.4 (0.8) | 60.2 (3.5) |
| | 95 | 55.7 (0.6) | 57.6 (1.2) | 63.4 (3.4) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND PERCENTILE DISTRIBUTIONS WITH STANDARD ERRORS, AGE 17: 1976 to 1988

### AGE 17

| | | 1976 | 1982 | 1988 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TOTAL SAMPLE** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 61.7 (0.3) | 61.3 (0.5) | 59.6 (0.5) |
| Standard Deviation | | 12.1 (0.1) | 12.6 (0.2) | 12.3 (0.4) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 41.8 (0.4) | 40.2 (0.5) | 39.1 (1.6) |
| | 10 | 46.2 (0.3) | 45.0 (0.6) | 44.3 (0.6) |
| | 25 | 53.6 (0.3) | 52.8 (0.5) | 52.0 (0.6) |
| | 50 | 61.9 (0.3) | 61.6 (0.5) | 59.8 (0.7) |
| | 75 | 70.1 (0.3) | 70.0 (0.5) | 68.1 (0.9) |
| | 90 | 77.3 (0.3) | 77.5 (0.6) | 74.8 (0. |
| | 95 | 81.4 (0.3) | 81.8 (0.8) | 79.1 (0. |
| **MALE STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 63.5 (0.3) | 63.1 (0.6) | 61.2 (0.7) |
| Standard Deviation | | 12.3 (0.2) | 12.6 (0.2) | 13.0 (0.5) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 43.0 (0.4) | 41.9 (1.1) | 39.2 (2.7) |
| | 10 | 47.7 (0.4) | 46.7 (0.7) | 44.9 (1.0) |
| | 25 | 55.1 (0.4) | 54.4 (0.7) | 52.8 (0.8) |
| | 50 | 63.7 (0.4) | 63.5 (0.5) | 61.7 (1.4) |
| | 75 | 72.0 (0.5) | 71.8 (0.8) | 70.4 (0.8) |
| | 90 | 79.3 (0.5) | 79.5 (0.8) | 77.3 (1.3) |
| | 95 | 83.3 (0.5) | 83.6 (1.5) | 81.0 (1.4) |
| **FEMALE STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 60.0 (0.3) | 59.6 (0.5) | 58.2 (0.6) |
| Standard Deviation | | 11.7 (0.1) | 12.3 (0.2) | 11.5 (0.5) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 40.4 (0.4) | 38.9 (0.5) | 39.1 (2.1) |
| | 10 | 44.9 (0.4) | 43.7 (0.6) | 43.7 (0.7) |
| | 25 | 52.2 (0.4) | 51.4 (0.6) | 51.4 (0.8) |
| | 50 | 60.1 (0.4) | 59.8 (0.5) | 58.7 (0.4) |
| | 75 | 68.0 (0.4) | 68.1 (0.7) | 65.8 (1.0) |
| | 90 | 74.9 (0.3) | 75.4 (0.8) | 71.9 (0.8) |
| | 95 | 78.9 (0.3) | 79.5 (1.0) | 75.9 (1.2) |
| **WHITE STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 63.4 (0.3) | 63.6 (0.4) | 61.4 (0.6) |
| Standard Deviation | | 11.5 (0.1) | 11.8 (0.2) | 11.7 (0.4) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 44.7 (0.3) | 44.2 (0.7) | 42.2 (1.2) |
| | 10 | 48.7 (0.3) | 48.3 (0.6) | 47.7 (1.5) |
| | 25 | 55.5 (0.3) | 55.5 (0.4) | 54.1 (0.8) |
| | 50 | 63.5 (0.3) | 63.8 (0.4) | 61.6 (1.0) |
| | 75 | 71.3 (0.3) | 71.6 (0.4) | 69.2 (0.6) |
| | 90 | 78.3 (0.3) | 78.7 (0.6) | 76.1 (0.7) |
| | 95 | 82.2 (0.5) | 82.9 (0.7) | 80.0 (1.0) |
| **BLACK STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 52.5 (0.5) | 51.6 (0.5) | 53.1 (1.0) |
| Standard Deviation | | 11.2 (0.2) | 11.3 (0.3) | 12.4 (0.6) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 34.1 (1.0) | 33.2 (0.8) | 32.2 (4.6) |
| | 10 | 38.4 (0.8) | 37.3 (0.5) | 38.5 (1.5) |
| | 25 | 45.0 (0.5) | 43.8 (0.8) | 45.2 (0.7) |
| | 50 | 52.6 (0.6) | 51.3 (0.5) | 52.4 (1.0) |
| | 75 | 60.0 (0.7) | 59.2 (1.0) | 61.5 (1.4) |
| | 90 | 66.5 (0.7) | 66.7 (1.2) | 69.6 (1.3) |
| | 95 | 70.7 (1.0) | 70.5 (1.0) | 73.6 (1.3) |
| **HISPANIC STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 51.5 (0.8) | 52.3 (1.2) | 53.8 (1.7) |
| Standard Deviation | | 11.6 (0.5) | 12.4 (0.8) | 11.5 (1.0) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 32.9 (0.7) | 31.9 (2.5) | 35.0 (5.5) |
| | 10 | 36.5 (1.3) | 36.5 (2.7) | 39.3 (6.4) |
| | 25 | 43.3 (0.9) | 43.5 (1.7) | 46.1 (3.2) |
| | 50 | 51.4 (0.8) | 52.4 (2.1) | 53.8 (3.5) |
| | 75 | 59.3 (1.2) | 60.7 (1.3) | 62.1 (1.3) |
| | 90 | 66.7 (2.2) | 68.2 (1.7) | 68.2 (2.2) |
| | 95 | 70.9 (2.0) | 72.9 (2.5) | 71.4 (5.3) |

## AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY AT GRADES 4, 8, AND 12: 1988

| | AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
| **NATION** | 214.0 (0.9) | 259.7 (0.9) | 296.3 (1.1) |
| **GENDER** | | | |
| Male | 214.8 (1.3) | 258.7 (1.1) | 298.6 (1.6) |
| Female | 213.3 (1.1) | 260.6 (0.9) | 294.1 (1.1) |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | | | |
| White | 220.0 (1.0) | 266.3 (1.2) | 301.9 (1.2) |
| Black | 198.1 (2.2) | 243.6 (1.9) | 273.8 (1.9) |
| Hispanic | 199.5 (1.9) | 240.6 (1.7) | 279.2 (2.3) |
| **REGION** | | | |
| Northeast | 215.7 (1.9) | 263.3 (2.0) | 294.1 (2.4) |
| Southeast | 210.2 (2.0) | 254.0 (1.7) | 290.9 (1.8) |
| Central | 218.4 (2.3) | 264.1 (2.1) | 300.2 (1.8) |
| West | 212.3 (1.5) | 257.8 (1.4) | 299.2 (2.5) |
| **TYPE OF SCHOOL** | | | |
| Public | 212.8 (0.9) | 258.5 (0.9) | 295.1 (0.9) |
| Nonpublic | 234.0 (6.9) | 269.6 (4.1) | 303.3 (4.1) |
| **SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY** | | | |
| Advantaged urban | 225.8 (2.1) | 269.8 (4.2) | 310.0 (2.8) |
| Disadvantaged urban | 192.5 (2.3) | 240.5 (2.8) | 274.4 (2.8) |
| Rural | 214.9 (4.5) | 269.1 (3.0) | 299.2 (3.9) |
| **PARENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION** | | | |
| Less than high school | 207.5 (3.5) | 237.8 (2.2) | 273.0 (2.5) |
| Graduated high school | 211.2 (1.8) | 252.5 (1.3) | 285.0 (1.6) |
| Some college | 221.4 (2.8) | 263.7 (1.3) | 298.6 (1.4) |
| Graduated college | 222.5 (1.3) | 272.2 (1.1) | 307.4 (1.5) |
| **READING MATERIALS IN THE HOME** | | | |
| 0 to 2 items | 202.2 (1.5) | 241.2 (1.5) | 272.3 (2.2) |
| 3 items | 214.6 (1.4) | 255.8 (1.2) | 291.7 (1.5) |
| 4 items | 223.4 (1.2) | 269.8 (1.0) | 303.3 (1.1) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## LEVELS OF CIVICS PROFICIENCY AT GRADES 4, 8, AND 12: 1988

| | GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL 200** | | | |
| **NATION** | 71.2 (1.2) | 94.4 (0.4) | 98.8 (0.2) |
| **GENDER** | | | |
| Male | 72.0 (1.7) | 92.3 (0.7) | 98.1 (0.4) |
| Female | 70.4 (1.7) | 96.4 (0.4) | 99.4 (0.2) |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | | | |
| White | 79.7 (1.3) | 96.3 (0.5) | 99.1 (0.2) |
| Black | 49.3 (3.4) | 90.5 (1.4) | 97.3 (0.7) |
| Hispanic | 50.8 (2.8) | 88.7 (1.4) | 98.0 (0.8) |
| **REGION** | | | |
| Northeast | 74.6 (2.3) | 95.5 (0.6) | 98.4 (0.7) |
| Southeast | 64.2 (2.9) | 94.0 (0.6) | 98.1 (0.5) |
| Central | 77.7 (3.3) | 94.2 (1.2) | 99.3 (0.2) |
| West | 69.1 (1.9) | 94.0 (0.7) | 99.3 (0.3) |
| **SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY** | | | |
| Advantaged urban | 88.5 (2.1) | 96.5 (1.9) | 99.3 (0.4) |
| Disadvantaged urban | 41.2 (3.2) | 88.8 (1.6) | 96.8 (1.3) |
| Rural | 72.1 (6.2) | 97.6 (1.1) | 99.7 (0.3) |
| **PARENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION** | | | |
| Less than high school | 62.4 (5.6) | 87.9 (1.6) | 96.6 (1.1) |
| Graduated high school | 70.2 (2.9) | 94.6 (0.7) | 98.7 (0.4) |
| Some college | 84.8 (2.9) | 96.9 (0.7) | 99.4 (0.2) |
| Graduated college | 80.3 (1.7) | 97.4 (0.6) | 99.3 (0.3) |
| **LEVEL 250** | | | |
| **NATION** | 9.6 (0.8) | 61.4 (1.0) | 89.2 (0.7) |
| **GENDER** | | | |
| Male | 10.3 (1.2) | 59.7 (1.3) | 88.0 (1.1) |
| Female | 8.9 (1.1) | 63.1 (1.2) | 90.4 (0.8) |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | | | |
| White | 12.3 (1.1) | 69.3 (1.4) | 92.8 (0.7) |
| Black | 2.2 (0.8) | 41.2 (2.6) | 76.8 (2.1) |
| Hispanic | 3.8 (1.2) | 41.0 (2.3) | 78.6 (2.0) |
| **REGION** | | | |
| Northeast | 11.1 (2.1) | 65.5 (2.5) | 89.0 (1.8) |
| Southeast | 8.7 (2.1) | 55.1 (2.1) | 86.5 (1.0) |
| Central | 10.9 (1.6) | 66.0 (2.5) | 91.7 (1.1) |
| West | 8.0 (1.1) | 59.7 (1.4) | 89.5 (1.4) |
| **SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY** | | | |
| Advantaged urban | 17.2 (3.1) | 70.3 (3.8) | 95.0 (1.2) |
| Disadvantaged urban | 2.0 (1.0) | 38.8 (3.5) | 76.5 (2.9) |
| Rural | 9.3 (3.1) | 70.3 (3.5) | 91.0 (1.8) |
| **PARENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION** | | | |
| Less than high school | 10.3 (3.9) | 34.1 (2.7) | 77.0 (2.7) |
| Graduated high school | 6.9 (1.7) | 54.2 (1.8) | 83.9 (1.5) |
| Some college | 12.4 (3.6) | 67.2 (1.7) | 92.7 (0.9) |
| Graduated college | 15.0 (1.5) | 75.0 (1.1) | 94.2 (0.8) |

| | GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL 300** | | | |
| **NATION** | 0.1 (0.1) | 12.7 (0.7) | 49.0 (1.1) |
| **GENDER** | | | |
| Male | 0.2 (0.2) | 14.1 (1.0) | 52.5 (1.5) |
| Female | 0.0 (0.0) | 11.4 (0.8) | 45.8 (1.3) |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | | | |
| White | 0.1 (0.1) | 16.3 (1.0) | 55.4 (1.3) |
| Black | 0.0 (0.0) | 4.0 (0.7) | 23.2 (1.8) |
| Hispanic | 0.0 (0.0) | 3.4 (0.9) | 29.5 (2.9) |
| **REGION** | | | |
| Northeast | 0.4 (0.4) | 16.0 (1.7) | 46.3 (2.5) |
| Southeast | 0.0 (0.0) | 9.5 (1.6) | 43.2 (1.9) |
| Central | 0.0 (0.0) | 15.4 (1.3) | 52.6 (1.8) |
| West | 0.0 (0.0) | 10.6 (1.2) | 53.0 (2.5) |
| **SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY** | | | |
| Advantaged urban | 0.0 (0.0) | 21.5 (3.4) | 64.3 (3.1) |
| Disadvantaged urban | 0.0 (0.0) | 3.5 (0.9) | 22.7 (3.3) |
| Rural | 0.0 (0.0) | 17.7 (1.9) | 48.8 (3.9) |
| **PARENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION** | | | |
| Less than high school | 0.0 (0.0) | 1.9 (0.6) | 23.1 (2.6) |
| Graduated high school | 0.6 (0.6) | 6.5 (0.9) | 36.0 (1.9) |
| Some college | 0.0 (0.0) | 11.7 (1.1) | 52.0 (1.9) |
| Graduated college | 0.0 (0.0) | 21.7 (1.2) | 60.7 (1.6) |
| **LEVEL 350** | | | |
| **NATION** | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.3 (0.1) | 6.0 (0.5) |
| **GENDER** | | | |
| Male | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.3 (0.2) | 8.8 (0.9) |
| Female | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.3 (0.2) | 3.5 (0.5) |
| **RACE/ETHNICITY** | | | |
| White | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.5 (0.1) | 7.1 (0.7) |
| Black | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.0 (0.0) | 1.0 (0.5) |
| Hispanic | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.0 (0.0) | 2.5 (0.7) |
| **REGION** | | | |
| Northeast | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.6 (0.4) | 4.2 (0.9) |
| Southeast | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.2 (0.1) | 5.3 (1.1) |
| Central | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.2 (0.1) | 8.0 (1.1) |
| West | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.3 (0.2) | 6.5 (1.1) |
| **SIZE AND TYPE OF COMMUNITY** | | | |
| Advantaged urban | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.4 (0.4) | 10.3 (1.8) |
| Disadvantaged urban | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.9 (0.5) |
| Rural | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.3 (0.3) | 5.2 (3.0) |
| **PARENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION** | | | |
| Less than high school | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.0 (0.0) | 1.5 (0.6) |
| Graduated high school | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.0 (0.0) | 2.1 (0.6) |
| Some college | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.1 (0.1) | 5.4 (0.8) |
| Graduated college | 0.0 (0.0) | 0.8 (0.2) | 9.7 (0.9) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the percentage of students at or above each level is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value. Standard errors of less than 0.05 have been rounded to 0.0.

## AVERAGE CIVICS PROFICIENCY, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND PERCENTILE DISTRIBUTIONS WITH STANDARD ERRORS, GRADES 4, 8, AND 12: 1988

| | | GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TOTAL SAMPLE** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 214.0 (0.9) | 259.7 (0.9) | 296.3 (1.1) |
| Standard Deviation | | 28.6 (0.6) | 35.7 (0.6) | 37.8 (0.6) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 163.7 (1.6) | 198.1 (2.2) | 228.4 (2.4) |
| | 10 | 176.5 (3.8) | 212.8 (1.5) | 247.0 (1.6) |
| | 25 | 195.9 (1.4) | 237.1 (1.3) | 273.0 (1.3) |
| | 50 | 215.7 (1.2) | 261.2 (1.6) | 299.0 (1.0) |
| | 75 | 233.3 (1.3) | 284.2 (1.3) | 322.1 (1.4) |
| | 90 | 248.9 (2.4) | 304.1 (1.3) | 342.0 (1.2) |
| | 95 | 258.4 (2.4) | 315.3 (1.1) | 353.6 (1.2) |
| **MALE STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 214.8 (1.3) | 258.7 (1.1) | 298.6 (1.6) |
| Standard Deviation | | 29.1 (0.9) | 38.7 (1.0) | 41.1 (1.0) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 164.1 (4.1) | 190.0 (3.3) | 221.8 (4.7) |
| | 10 | 177.5 (2.9) | 207.6 (2.0) | 244.0 (3.0) |
| | 25 | 196.2 (2.0) | 233.9 (1.8) | 273.8 (2.4) |
| | 50 | 216.0 (1.3) | 260.7 (1.7) | 302.5 (1.5) |
| | 75 | 234.0 (1.9) | 286.1 (1.3) | 326.8 (2.4) |
| | 90 | 250.7 (3.7) | 307.0 (2.4) | 347.7 (2.7) |
| | 95 | 261.8 (2.3) | 318.0 (2.6) | 360.1 (3.2) |
| **FEMALE STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 213.3 (1.1) | 260.6 (0.9) | 294.1 (1.1) |
| Standard Deviation | | 28.1 (0.8) | 32.6 (0.6) | 34.3 (0.8) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 163.4 (2.1) | 205.2 (3.5) | 234.1 (2.4) |
| | 10 | 175.8 (2.4) | 218.3 (1.2) | 249.1 (1.7) |
| | 25 | 195.6 (1.9) | 239.4 (0.8) | 272.3 (1.6) |
| | 50 | 215.4 (2.1) | 261.6 (0.8) | 296.0 (1.5) |
| | 75 | 232.8 (1.4) | 282.7 (1.4) | 317.9 (0.9) |
| | 90 | 247.7 (1.8) | 301.2 (1.8) | 336.4 (1.9) |
| | 95 | 255.6 (2.3) | 312.6 (3.1) | 346.5 (2.3) |

| | | GRADE 4 | GRADE 8 | GRADE 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WHITE STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 220.0 (1.0) | 266.3 (1.2) | 301.9 (1.2) |
| Standard Deviation | | 26.5 (0.8) | 34.2 (0.8) | 35.7 (0.7) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 173.9 (2.9) | 206.4 (2.2) | 240.8 (1.5) |
| | 10 | 185.8 (1.4) | 222.0 (1.8) | 255.7 (2.2) |
| | 25 | 203.9 (1.0) | 245.1 (2.3) | 279.9 (1.4) |
| | 50 | 221.3 (2.1) | 268.4 (1.4) | 304.3 (1.1) |
| | 75 | 237.8 (1.7) | 289.7 (1.1) | 326.1 (2.2) |
| | 90 | 252.5 (1.9) | 308.6 (1.4) | 344.8 (2.2) |
| | 95 | 261.4 (3.0) | 319.7 (2.8) | 356.1 (1.8) |
| **BLACK STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 198.1 (2.2) | 243.6 (1.9) | 273.8 (1.9) |
| Standard Deviation | | 27.0 (1.4) | 33.4 (1.0) | 36.3 (1.1) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 151.2 (4.8) | 188.0 (3.9) | 209.4 (3.5) |
| | 10 | 163.2 (2.9) | 202.1 (4.0) | 225.1 (2.7) |
| | 25 | 180.5 (4.2) | 221.3 (3.8) | 250.4 (3.2) |
| | 50 | 200.0 (1.9) | 244.2 (2.7) | 276.2 (2.1) |
| | 75 | 216.8 (3.6) | 267.0 (2.3) | 298.9 (2.4) |
| | 90 | 231.1 (1.7) | 285.6 (1.8) | 318.3 (3.1) |
| | 95 | 239.2 (5.4) | 297.4 (9.7) | 330.0 (3.6) |
| **HISPANIC STUDENTS** | | | | |
| Average Proficiency | | 199.5 (1.9) | 240.6 (1.7) | 279.2 (2.3) |
| Standard Deviation | | 28.8 (1.3) | 33.8 (1.4) | 37.6 (1.8) |
| Percentiles | 5 | 150.5 (5.4) | 180.9 (7.3) | 209.4 (6.9) |
| | 10 | 164.0 (2.9) | 196.6 (4.0) | 226.9 (5.9) |
| | 25 | 180.4 (2.2) | 219.3 (2.1) | 256.4 (4.6) |
| | 50 | 201.0 (1.9) | 243.0 (1.4) | 282.8 (2.6) |
| | 75 | 217.6 (2.0) | 263.1 (1.6) | 305.8 (2.9) |
| | 90 | 235.3 (6.1) | 282.0 (2.2) | 323.5 (3.2) |
| | 95 | 246.4 (6.3) | 293.0 (3.4) | 336.3 (2.9) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING CORRECTLY TO THE CIVICS ASSESSMENT ITEMS, 1988

### GRADE 4

| | CATEGORY* | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| People choose president | P | 97.5 (0.4) | 97.6 (0.4) | 97.4 (0.6) | 98.8 (0.4) | 94.9 (1.5) | 93.7 (1.1) |
| Judge presides over courtroom | I | 89.8 (0.7) | 89.4 (0.9) | 90.2 (1.2) | 91.6 (0.7) | 85.9 (2.2) | 86.4 (1.6) |
| Vice-president succeeds dead president | I | 89.7 (0.9) | 89.9 (1.1) | 89.4 (1.1) | 92.5 (0.9) | 82.5 (2.3) | 83.3 (2.2) |
| Purpose of crosswalk laws | D | 86.8 (0.9) | 84.3 (1.3) | 89.3 (1.1) | 89.8 (1.0) | 76.6 (2.1) | 82.9 (2.0) |
| Local government does not clean house | I | 83.3 (0.9) | 82.2 (1.4) | 84.2 (1.3) | 87.9 (1.1) | 71.5 (1.8) | 71.6 (2.3) |
| Purpose of government is making laws | I | 83.1 (1.1) | 84.2 (1.5) | 82.1 (1.3) | 86.3 (1.3) | 76.1 (3.3) | 72.2 (2.5) |
| Local government does catch lawbreakers | I | 79.5 (1.2) | 80.3 (1.3) | 78.6 (1.6) | 81.7 (1.2) | 72.9 (3.1) | 74.3 (2.7) |
| Ballot—tax collector | P | 78.4 (1.0) | 77.0 (1.4) | 79.6 (1.6) | 79.3 (1.0) | 78.5 (2.9) | 71.6 (2.4) |
| Local government runs parks | I | 78.4 (0.9) | 77.1 (1.2) | 79.7 (1.2) | 81.9 (1.2) | 69.9 (2.2) | 69.6 (2.2) |
| Judges must obey laws | R | 76.8 (1.0) | 79.3 (1.2) | 74.4 (1.6) | 78.8 (1.3) | 72.6 (2.3) | 71.2 (2.4) |
| Local government not grow vegetables | I | 75.8 (1.0) | 74.6 (1.1) | 77.0 (1.6) | 81.9 (1.1) | 61.2 (3.0) | 60.6 (2.2) |
| Arrested person no right to escape | R | 75.7 (1.2) | 74.1 (1.7) | 77.2 (1.4) | 78.6 (1.6) | 68.9 (2.8) | 65.7 (2.7) |
| Local government cleans streets | I | 75.5 (1.1) | 77.1 (1.5) | 73.9 (1.5) | 77.7 (1.5) | 68.3 (2.6) | 72.4 (2.6) |
| Local government does not fix family car | I | 73.0 (1.5) | 72.2 (1.9) | 73.7 (1.6) | 78.2 (1.9) | 60.9 (2.9) | 57.9 (2.8) |
| Local government does put up stop signs | I | 72.1 (1.3) | 73.8 (1.8) | 70.4 (1.6) | 75.0 (1.6) | 63.3 (3.0) | 66.9 (2.6) |
| Government does not own and run farms | I | 71.8 (1.4) | 74.9 (1.7) | 68.8 (2.1) | 75.9 (1.5) | 59.1 (4.7) | 62.1 (3.1) |
| Must be citizen to vote | P | 69.3 (1.2) | 67.8 (1.5) | 70.7 (1.7) | 71.6 (1.8) | 62.2 (2.8) | 64.4 (2.8) |
| Government runs police station | I | 69.1 (1.1) | 72.9 (1.4) | 65.3 (2.1) | 71.1 (1.4) | 63.4 (2.8) | 64.4 (2.6) |
| Laws can be changed | D | 68.5 (1.1) | 71.0 (1.6) | 66.1 (1.9) | 69.8 (1.3) | 68.4 (2.7) | 62.8 (2.2) |
| Laws do not say adults must vote | R | 67.9 (1.1) | 69.7 (1.6) | 66.2 (1.7) | 71.7 (1.3) | 55.2 (4.1) | 60.7 (2.6) |
| Ballot—3 elected to town council | P | 66.5 (1.1) | 65.8 (1.7) | 67.2 (1.7) | 68.7 (1.5) | 60.3 (2.3) | 61.5 (2.1) |
| Court decides if someone broke the law | I | 66.0 (1.2) | 70.4 (1.9) | 61.7 (1.6) | 71.3 (1.5) | 52.8 (3.6) | 51.8 (2.0) |
| Army generals must obey laws | R | 65.9 (1.0) | 64.5 (1.8) | 67.1 (1.5) | 67.2 (1.3) | 65.6 (2.6) | 62.3 (3.5) |
| Members of Congress must obey laws | R | 64.0 (1.2) | 64.1 (1.6) | 64.0 (1.7) | 64.5 (1.5) | 64.9 (2.8) | 63.3 (2.7) |
| Lunch: make list and vote | P | 63.4 (1.1) | 60.4 (1.5) | 66.3 (1.4) | 67.9 (1.4) | 53.9 (2.2) | 52.1 (2.1) |
| Bill of Rights—first 10 amendments | R | 63.3 (1.4) | 63.7 (1.7) | 63.0 (1.8) | 67.7 (1.6) | 51.2 (3.8) | 51.7 (3.0) |
| President cannot order to break law | R | 62.9 (1.4) | 63.4 (1.8) | 62.4 (2.0) | 64.3 (1.5) | 61.8 (3.3) | 54.8 (3.2) |
| Local government not run restaurants | I | 62.1 (1.3) | 61.0 (1.6) | 63.1 (1.9) | 65.5 (1.6) | 52.7 (2.3) | 54.6 (2.9) |
| Citizen has right to vote | R | 60.0 (1.3) | 59.4 (2.1) | 60.5 (1.7) | 64.1 (1.5) | 45.4 (2.9) | 54.5 (2.7) |
| Government owns and operates roads | I | 59.8 (1.3) | 63.4 (1.4) | 56.3 (1.9) | 63.4 (1.5) | 48.3 (3.0) | 51.8 (2.8) |
| All 3 levels of government stop crime | I | 58.9 (1.3) | 62.1 (1.8) | 55.9 (1.9) | 63.5 (1.7) | 46.5 (3.0) | 49.0 (2.7) |
| FBI agents must obey laws | R | 57.1 (1.1) | 57.8 (1.6) | 56.4 (1.7) | 55.7 (1.5) | 66.7 (2.5) | 53.8 (2.7) |
| National government sets laws for country | I | 52.8 (1.5) | 56.4 (1.9) | 49.3 (2.1) | 58.5 (1.9) | 38.2 (3.5) | 39.3 (2.6) |
| Government does not run movie theatres | I | 51.1 (1.4) | 53.9 (2.1) | 48.4 (1.4) | 54.0 (1.9) | 43.4 (2.6) | 44.2 (2.9) |
| President cannot stop radio, newspaper | R | 49.9 (1.5) | 51.8 (1.9) | 48.1 (1.8) | 49.8 (1.8) | 51.1 (2.5) | 50.7 (3.4) |
| Mayor usually head of city | I | 49.4 (1.5) | 52.7 (2.0) | 46.3 (1.8) | 51.0 (2.0) | 46.3 (3.4) | 41.4 (3.0) |
| President cannot break law | R | 48.2 (1.4) | 50.8 (1.9) | 45.7 (2.0) | 50.4 (1.7) | 45.4 (3.6) | 37.6 (2.8) |
| Justice for all | R | 48.0 (1.4) | 45.6 (1.9) | 50.2 (1.8) | 50.1 (1.5) | 42.7 (3.3) | 38.2 (2.9) |
| Election by secret ballot | P | 46.6 (1.3) | 46.7 (1.6) | 46.6 (2.1) | 50.2 (1.8) | 36.3 (3.5) | 38.8 (2.5) |
| Local government checks parking meters | I | 45.3 (1.5) | 46.4 (2.2) | 44.1 (1.9) | 49.7 (1.7) | 32.5 (3.6) | 38.0 (3.7) |
| President's term is 4 years | I | 44.9 (1.5) | 46.2 (2.0) | 43.6 (1.9) | 48.6 (1.6) | 33.9 (3.5) | 37.3 (3.0) |
| Government does not run gas stations | I | 40.7 (1.4) | 43.8 (1.8) | 37.7 (1.9) | 43.9 (1.6) | 26.5 (2.8) | 37.4 (3.3) |
| Stopping work is called striking | P | 35.2 (1.4) | 37.4 (1.7) | 33.1 (2.1) | 37.7 (2.0) | 30.7 (2.6) | 26.5 (3.0) |
| Person should receive jury trial, if wanted | R | 35.0 (1.2) | 41.0 (1.9) | 29.2 (1.8) | 36.7 (1.7) | 28.3 (2.7) | 33.4 (3.1) |
| Separation of powers divides authority | I | 34.9 (1.2) | 36.5 (1.9) | 33.3 (1.9) | 35.3 (1.7) | 30.0 (2.2) | 35.5 (2.7) |
| Not all levels of government have military | I | 34.0 (1.4) | 36.1 (1.9) | 32.0 (1.7) | 37.6 (1.8) | 23.4 (2.7) | 24.8 (2.6) |
| Not buying products is called boycotting | P | 19.4 (1.2) | 22.7 (1.8) | 16.1 (1.4) | 20.1 (1.4) | 18.9 (2.6) | 14.8 (2.0) |
| Supreme Court decides constitutionality | I | 16.5 (0.9) | 16.1 (1.3) | 16.9 (1.0) | 15.7 (1.1) | 17.6 (1.9) | 17.8 (1.9) |
| Average Percentage of Students Responding Correctly | | 61.7 (0.5) | 62.7 (0.6) | 60.8 (0.6) | 64.4 (0.6) | 54.7 (1.1) | 54.8 (1.1) |

*Note: The items were categorized as follows: P = Political Processes; R = Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law; D = Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government; and I = Structures and Functions of Political Institutions. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## AVERAGE PERCENT CORRECT FOR EACH CIVICS CONTENT AREA, 1988

### GRADE 4

| | | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POLITICAL PROCESSES | Average Percent Correct | 59.5 (0.6) | 59.4 (0.6) | 59.6 (0.8) | 61.8 (0.7) | 54.4 (1.3) | 52.9 (1.2) |
| | Difference | | -0.1 (0.5) | 0.1 (0.5) | 2.3 (0.3) | -5.1 (1.2) | -6.6 (1.2) |
| RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND THE LAW | Average Percent Correct | 59.6 (0.6) | 60.4 (0.8) | 58.8 (0.8) | 61.5 (0.6) | 55.4 (1.5) | 53.7 (1.3) |
| | Difference | | 0.8 (0.5) | -0.8 (0.5) | 1.9 (0.4) | -4.2 (1.4) | -5.9 (1.2) |
| DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT | Average Percent Correct | 77.7 (0.7) | 77.6 (1.0) | 77.7 (1.2) | 79.8 (0.8) | 72.5 (1.7) | 72.8 (1.4) |
| | Difference | | 0.0 (0.8) | 0.0 (0.8) | 2.2 (0.4) | -5.1 (1.5) | -4.8 (1.4) |
| STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS | Average Percent Correct | 62.3 (0.6) | 63.7 (0.7) | 60.9 (0.7) | 65.6 (0.7) | 53.1 (1.3) | 54.8 (1.3) |
| | Difference | | 1.5 (0.4) | -1.4 (0.4) | 3.3 (0.3) | -9.2 (1.3) | -7.7 (1.1) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the average percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value. Note: "Difference" refers to the difference between the national and subpopulation results.

## PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING CORRECTLY TO THE CIVICS ASSESSMENT ITEMS, 1988

### GRADE 8

| | CATEGORY* | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Purpose of crosswalk laws | D | 95.7 (0.5) | 93.4 (0.9) | 98.1 (0.5) | 97.0 (0.6) | 94.0 (1.6) | 89.9 (1.9) |
| Vice-president succeeds dead President | I | 95.6 (0.5) | 94.3 (0.8) | 96.8 (0.5) | 96.5 (0.6) | 93.3 (1.4) | 92.1 (2.0) |
| Right to lawyer | R | 93.3 (0.7) | 91.0 (1.1) | 95.6 (0.6) | 94.3 (1.1) | 89.7 (1.9) | 92.6 (1.0) |
| Ballot—tax collector | P | 92.8 (0.6) | 90.8 (1.1) | 94.9 (0.7) | 93.9 (0.8) | 91.7 (1.8) | 89.2 (2.1) |
| Right to know what accused of | R | 92.4 (0.7) | 90.8 (1.0) | 94.1 (0.7) | 93.2 (0.8) | 90.6 (1.8) | 92.0 (1.4) |
| Local government runs parks | I | 92.3 (0.8) | 91.6 (1.1) | 92.9 (0.9) | 93.3 (0.9) | 89.2 (1.9) | 89.2 (2.5) |
| Local government cleans streets | I | 91.1 (0.7) | 90.1 (1.1) | 92.1 (1.0) | 92.8 (0.9) | 85.9 (2.1) | 88.0 (2.1) |
| Local government does not clean house | I | 90.6 (0.8) | 90.8 (1.0) | 90.4 (1.1) | 91.9 (1.0) | 87.4 (2.1) | 86.6 (2.4) |
| Court decides if someone broke the law | I | 89.7 (0.7) | 87.5 (1.3) | 91.7 (0.8) | 91.5 (0.9) | 87.9 (1.7) | 81.4 (2.4) |
| Name president | I | 89.2 (0.9) | 85.3 (1.5) | 92.9 (1.0) | 90.7 (1.1) | 87.6 (2.2) | 84.1 (3.3) |
| Refusing to obey laws is illegal | P | 87.9 (0.7) | 86.8 (1.1) | 89.0 (1.1) | 91.1 (0.9) | 81.1 (2.2) | 79.1 (2.3) |
| Judges must obey laws | R | 87.6 (1.0) | 85.5 (1.3) | 89.5 (1.3) | 88.7 (1.2) | 84.7 (2.1) | 83.9 (2.8) |
| Must be citizen to vote | P | 87.2 (0.9) | 83.8 (1.6) | 90.7 (0.9) | 88.1 (1.1) | 84.2 (2.2) | 85.0 (2.8) |
| Refusing to pay taxes is illegal | P | 87.1 (0.8) | 86.7 (1.2) | 87.4 (1.3) | 90.3 (1.1) | 79.2 (2.7) | 78.1 (2.3) |
| Laws can be changed | D | 86.6 (0.8) | 86.6 (1.2) | 86.5 (1.1) | 89.5 (1.0) | 81.8 (2.1) | 77.5 (2.3) |
| Citizen has right to vote | R | 86.3 (0.9) | 85.9 (1.5) | 86.8 (1.1) | 89.0 (1.1) | 80.4 (2.7) | 78.3 (2.6) |
| Picking neighbors not constitutional right | R | 85.1 (1.0) | 83.5 (1.4) | 86.7 (1.1) | 88.7 (1.3) | 75.5 (2.9) | 76.8 (2.1) |
| Right to remain silent | R | 84.0 (0.9) | 82.7 (1.3) | 85.3 (1.1) | 86.6 (1.1) | 76.7 (2.7) | 78.0 (2.6) |
| State governors usually elected | P | 83.8 (0.9) | 83.1 (1.3) | 84.5 (1.2) | 86.1 (1.1) | 77.9 (2.8) | 78.2 (3.1) |
| President can suggest laws to Congress | I | 83.6 (1.1) | 80.5 (1.4) | 86.3 (1.3) | 86.6 (1.2) | 77.9 (2.7) | 73.2 (2.4) |
| Presidential term | I | 83.3 (0.8) | 84.9 (1.2) | 81.9 (1.3) | 86.7 (0.9) | 74.9 (2.3) | 74.7 (2.7) |
| Government runs police station | I | 83.1 (0.9) | 83.2 (1.3) | 83.0 (1.2) | 85.0 (1.0) | 80.2 (2.0) | 76.6 (2.7) |
| Ballot—3 elected to town council | P | 82.3 (1.1) | 80.5 (1.6) | 84.2 (1.4) | 84.7 (1.2) | 77.4 (2.7) | 76.2 (3.5) |
| President's term is 4 years | I | 81.5 (0.9) | 82.9 (1.2) | 80.2 (1.2) | 86.0 (1.1) | 71.2 (3.1) | 70.2 (2.9) |
| Accused no right to freedom | R | 81.3 (1.3) | 82.7 (1.5) | 79.9 (1.6) | 82.7 (1.5) | 77.2 (2.8) | 79.1 (3.0) |
| Election by secret ballot | P | 80.2 (1.1) | 77.7 (1.9) | 82.7 (1.3) | 84.3 (1.5) | 71.7 (2.7) | 70.2 (2.9) |
| Stopping work is called striking | P | 79.5 (1.1) | 78.9 (1.4) | 80.1 (1.4) | 82.7 (1.3) | 72.9 (2.2) | 69.9 (4.5) |
| Laws do not say adults must vote | R | 79.2 (1.0) | 79.8 (1.7) | 78.7 (1.3) | 83.3 (1.2) | 64.9 (2.7) | 72.0 (2.9) |
| Justice for all | R | 79.1 (1.0) | 76.4 (1.8) | 81.9 (1.4) | 79.7 (1.2) | 79.6 (2.4) | 74.6 (2.4) |
| Government does not own and run farms | I | 79.1 (0.9) | 80.5 (1.1) | 77.8 (1.3) | 81.6 (1.3) | 72.1 (2.8) | 72.1 (2.2) |
| Presenting views to media is legal | P | 78.8 (0.9) | 78.0 (1.3) | 79.7 (1.5) | 81.9 (1.2) | 70.8 (2.6) | 69.6 (2.4) |
| Government owns and operates roads | I | 77.7 (1.0) | 78.3 (1.7) | 77.2 (1.3) | 81.6 (1.3) | 67.8 (2.4) | 67.0 (3.0) |
| All 3 levels of government stop crime | I | 77.4 (1.2) | 77.4 (1.8) | 77.4 (1.4) | 82.0 (1.5) | 67.0 (2.4) | 63.4 (3.1) |
| Writing protest letters is legal | P | 76.9 (1.2) | 78.2 (1.5) | 75.7 (1.9) | 81.8 (1.6) | 61.3 (3.0) | 69.5 (3.2) |
| Members of Congress must obey laws | R | 76.4 (1.0) | 74.9 (1.7) | 77.6 (1.3) | 77.4 (1.4) | 72.7 (2.5) | 75.0 (2.2) |
| Local government not run restaurants | I | 76.3 (1.1) | 78.0 (1.7) | 74.6 (1.6) | 79.4 (1.3) | 66.0 (3.2) | 70.3 (2.6) |
| President cannot order to break law | R | 76.3 (1.2) | 76.3 (1.7) | 76.3 (1.6) | 77.6 (1.5) | 74.6 (2.5) | 72.6 (3.5) |
| Federal government does not ensure jobs | I | 75.9 (1.1) | 76.4 (1.5) | 75.3 (1.6) | 79.2 (1.4) | 68.5 (2.8) | 67.1 (2.6) |
| President cannot stop radio, newspaper | R | 75.8 (1.1) | 78.6 (1.7) | 73.3 (1.3) | 76.7 (1.4) | 73.9 (3.0) | 71.7 (3.2) |
| Bill must pass House and Senate | P | 75.6 (1.0) | 71.1 (1.5) | 79.8 (1.4) | 78.7 (1.5) | 66.7 (3.4) | 66.1 (2.5) |
| Drawing on poll tax | R | 75.4 (1.2) | 74.5 (1.9) | 76.3 (1.5) | 77.7 (1.6) | 67.6 (2.6) | 75.5 (2.4) |
| US courts decide if sex discrimination | I | 74.7 (1.0) | 74.0 (1.4) | 75.3 (1.5) | 78.2 (1.2) | 67.9 (3.2) | 63.4 (3.9) |
| Two candidates provides choice | D | 74.3 (1.1) | 71.8 (1.6) | 76.7 (1.4) | 78.0 (1.5) | 64.7 (3.4) | 61.7 (2.9) |
| National government prints money | I | 74.1 (1.3) | 77.4 (1.6) | 70.8 (1.8) | 79.6 (1.4) | 60.6 (2.9) | 60.1 (3.8) |
| Citizens not refuse to pay taxes | P | 74.0 (1.1) | 70.3 (1.6) | 77.5 (1.4) | 78.0 (1.4) | 65.8 (2.3) | 60.7 (3.1) |
| Army generals must obey laws | R | 73.9 (1.2) | 72.0 (1.6) | 75.7 (1.4) | 74.2 (1.4) | 76.8 (2.9) | 72.9 (2.6) |
| Accused right to lawyer and jury trial | R | 73.7 (1.1) | 72.0 (1.5) | 75.3 (1.6) | 77.9 (1.4) | 61.6 (2.6) | 63.5 (2.5) |
| Accused not go to jail without evidence | R | 73.0 (1.1) | 72.3 (1.5) | 73.7 (1.3) | 74.8 (1.3) | 71.8 (2.7) | 64.9 (2.5) |
| Constitution protects individual freedoms | D | 72.9 (1.4) | 69.6 (2.0) | 76.1 (1.5) | 75.6 (1.8) | 61.9 (3.0) | 64.4 (2.3) |
| Bill of Rights—first 10 amendments | R | 72.8 (1.4) | 72.3 (1.6) | 73.3 (1.9) | 75.5 (1.6) | 66.4 (3.4) | 67.3 (2.6) |
| Government does not run movie theatres | - | 72.7 (1.3) | 74.8 (1.7) | 70.7 (1.7) | 75.6 (1.6) | 60.6 (2.5) | 70.6 (3.3) |
| Duty of jury is to determine if guilty | I | 71.4 (1.4) | 67.4 (1.9) | 75.3 (1.5) | 75.4 (1.7) | 62.7 (2.8) | 61.4 (3.4) |
| National defense not local | I | 71.2 (1.3) | 67.7 (2.0) | 74.5 (1.8) | 74.8 (1.6) | 64.7 (2.1) | 59.1 (3.2) |
| Police can do nothing unless law broken | R | 71.0 (1.2) | 68.4 (1.9) | 73.6 (1.5) | 73.6 (1.7) | 64.9 (2.7) | 65.3 (2.3) |
| Constitution grants freedom of religion | R | 70.3 (1.3) | 69.4 (1.8) | 71.1 (1.6) | 75.5 (1.6) | 57.3 (3.3) | 58.5 (2.9) |
| Congress cannot restrict freedom of press | D | 69.3 (1.3) | 69.7 (1.7) | 68.9 (1.8) | 71.2 (1.7) | 66.9 (2.8) | 62.9 (3.1) |
| US courts decide if idea is taken | I | 68.3 (1.2) | 69.8 (1.8) | 66.8 (1.8) | 72.4 (1.5) | 57.6 (3.0) | 57.8 (2.7) |
| Suing in court is legal | P | 68.1 (1.1) | 68.7 (1.2) | 67.5 (1.5) | 69.7 (1.4) | 63.4 (2.7) | 62.3 (2.4) |
| President cannot break law | R | 67.3 (1.1) | 67.3 (1.7) | 67.2 (1.7) | 69.2 (1.4) | 64.6 (3.2) | 60.1 (2.9) |
| Bill of Rights: no cruel, unusual punishment | R | 67.1 (1.1) | 67.1 (1.9) | 67.1 (1.6) | 72.1 (1.4) | 56.0 (2.7) | 53.4 (4.0) |
| Government does not run gas stations | I | 67.0 (1.4) | 70.4 (2.1) | 64.0 (1.5) | 70.4 (1.7) | 58.0 (2.9) | 59.5 (3.3) |
| Person should receive jury trial, if wanted | R | 66.2 (1.4) | 68.0 (1.9) | 64.5 (1.8) | 70.5 (1.7) | 58.8 (2.8) | 52.3 (4.0) |
| Local government runs public schools | I | 66.2 (1.0) | 63.1 (1.8) | 69.3 (1.7) | 68.2 (1.4) | 59.3 (3.3) | 62.2 (3.2) |
| Students cite beliefs, not violate rights | R | 65.4 (1.3) | 64.3 (2.0) | 66.4 (1.9) | 69.3 (1.6) | 56.8 (3.2) | 54.5 (3.3) |
| US courts cannot declare war | I | 64.9 (1.3) | 65.7 (1.8) | 64.1 (1.7) | 66.6 (1.4) | 59.0 (3.2) | 62.0 (3.2) |
| 1954 ruling: courts protect citizen rights | R | 64.9 (1.2) | 62.7 (1.9) | 66.9 (1.7) | 67.1 (1.5) | 61.2 (2.7) | 55.2 (4.2) |
| County is highest level of local government | I | 64.7 (1.3) | 63.1 (1.7) | 66.2 (1.9) | 68.0 (1.5) | 54.9 (3.1) | 59.7 (2.9) |
| Federal government regulates international trade | I | 64.7 (1.3) | 67.9 (1.6) | 61.6 (1.8) | 70.5 (1.8) | 49.2 (2.5) | 51.8 (3.9) |
| Freedom speech not protect shout "Fire" | R | 64.4 (1.2) | 66.5 (1.6) | 62.4 (1.8) | 68.3 (1.5) | 56.5 (3.0) | 57.2 (2.9) |
| Not buying products is called boycotting | P | 64.3 (1.4) | 62.4 (1.9) | 66.0 (1.7) | 68.3 (1.7) | 59.7 (3.6) | 46.5 (3.3) |
| FBI agents must obey laws | R | 63.9 (1.3) | 62.7 (1.8) | 65.1 (2.0) | 62.8 (1.6) | 67.9 (2.9) | 64.7 (3.2) |
| Constitution: basis for Supreme Court cases | I | 63.8 (1.2) | 63.1 (1.8) | 64.6 (1.9) | 67.6 (1.6) | 52.0 (3.2) | 57.4 (3.0) |

*Note: The items were categorized as follows: P = Political Processes; R = Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law; D = Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government; and I = Structures and Functions of Political Institutions. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING CORRECTLY TO THE CIVICS ASSESSMENT ITEMS, 1988

### GRADE 8 (continued)

| | CATEGORY* | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not all levels of government have military | I | 63.7 (1.3) | 67.2 (1.7) | 60.6 (1.8) | 70.6 (1.7) | 44.5 (2.7) | 45.3 (3.8) |
| Community must weigh pros and cons | P | 63.6 (1.1) | 58.8 (1.5) | 68.0 (1.5) | 68.3 (1.2) | 52.1 (3.2) | 51.1 (3.6) |
| Landlord may bring lawsuit against tenant | R | 63.3 (1.2) | 56.7 (1.7) | 69.4 (1.8) | 65.6 (1.7) | 65.0 (2.9) | 46.8 (3.5) |
| Issue in headlines concerns local government | I | 63.0 (1.1) | 62.4 (1.6) | 63.5 (1.8) | 68.9 (1.4) | 46.6 (2.6) | 51.2 (2.9) |
| Congress cannot establish national church | D | 62.9 (1.3) | 63.6 (1.7) | 62.2 (1.7) | 65.6 (1.6) | 54.4 (2.3) | 57.2 (3.4) |
| Cannot be sentenced without trial | I | 62.9 (1.2) | 62.7 (1.8) | 63.0 (1.7) | 64.5 (1.6) | 61.1 (3.2) | 52.5 (2.8) |
| Local government not regulate military | I | 62.5 (1.2) | 63.5 (2.0) | 61.5 (1.9) | 68.0 (1.6) | 44.1 (2.9) | 53.4 (3.3) |
| Both groups allowed to speak | R | 62.2 (1.4) | 58.1 (1.6) | 66.2 (2.1) | 65.5 (1.9) | 55.0 (3.2) | 52.9 (3.0) |
| Senators part of legislative branch | I | 60.2 (1.2) | 59.5 (1.9) | 60.9 (1.9) | 62.3 (1.6) | 54.2 (2.5) | 52.0 (2.9) |
| Civil Rights in Constitution | R | 60.0 (1.4) | 58.5 (1.6) | 61.4 (1.9) | 63.2 (1.7) | 52.4 (3.4) | 44.0 (2.8) |
| Treason—make war or give aid to enemy | R | 59.1 (1.4) | 62.1 (1.5) | 56.4 (2.0) | 64.5 (1.7) | 43.8 (3.7) | 47.3 (2.8) |
| Lobbying is legal way to change law | P | 58.7 (1.4) | 60.2 (1.9) | 57.3 (2.0) | 63.5 (1.7) | 48.4 (3.0) | 45.1 (3.3) |
| Activities of parties not constitutionally defined | I | 58.4 (1.3) | 56.0 (1.7) | 60.6 (1.7) | 63.8 (1.7) | 46.0 (2.6) | 43.1 (2.9) |
| Innocent until proven guilty | R | 58.3 (1.4) | 60.3 (1.7) | 56.4 (2.2) | 58.6 (1.8) | 61.6 (2.7) | 51.3 (3.1) |
| Separation of powers divides authority | I | 58.1 (1.1) | 54.0 (1.8) | 62.2 (1.5) | 59.3 (1.5) | 54.9 (2.5) | 58.8 (3.2) |
| Federal government regulates food, drugs | I | 57.5 (1.3) | 62.4 (2.1) | 52.6 (1.7) | 60.9 (1.5) | 49.0 (2.6) | 48.3 (3.4) |
| Hunger strike is legal | P | 56.6 (1.4) | 58.6 (2.0) | 54.7 (1.8) | 57.6 (1.7) | 56.6 (3.1) | 47.4 (3.4) |
| Local government increases parking fines | I | 56.4 (1.3) | 53.3 (2.1) | 59.1 (1.8) | 60.2 (1.6) | 50.2 (3.4) | 41.3 (3.8) |
| Congress consists of House and Senate | I | 55.7 (1.6) | 57.0 (2.4) | 54.5 (1.8) | 58.8 (2.0) | 49.9 (3.0) | 45.0 (3.5) |
| Bill goes to committee of House | P | 54.0 (1.6) | 49.9 (2.2) | 57.8 (1.8) | 58.2 (1.9) | 46.8 (2.5) | 40.1 (4.1) |
| Party chooses candidate in primary | P | 52.6 (1.3) | 50.4 (1.3) | 54.8 (1.9) | 56.9 (1.6) | 42.6 (3.1) | 42.1 (3.5) |
| Declaration: right to life, liberty, etc. | R | 52.5 (1.2) | 51.3 (2.2) | 53.7 (1.5) | 56.4 (1.4) | 37.6 (3.0) | 46.6 (3.2) |
| Powers of Congress from Constitution | I | 51.7 (1.1) | 54.7 (1.2) | 48.6 (1.7) | 55.0 (1.5) | 43.9 (3.4) | 43.8 (2.9) |
| US has representative democracy | D | 51.1 (1.2) | 48.8 (1.8) | 53.3 (1.6) | 53.1 (1.7) | 45.0 (3.5) | 49.0 (3.4) |
| U.S. senator is elected | P | 50.9 (1.2) | 52.4 (1.8) | 49.5 (1.4) | 54.8 (1.4) | 43.1 (2.2) | 39.3 (3.6) |
| Headline refers to judicial power | I | 50.8 (1.3) | 50.5 (2.1) | 51.0 (1.6) | 54.3 (1.5) | 41.4 (2.5) | 39.9 (3.3) |
| Voting age: most recent amendment | R | 50.6 (1.2) | 46.2 (1.7) | 54.7 (1.6) | 51.6 (1.6) | 52.3 (2.8) | 40.3 (2.6) |
| Miranda ruling | R | 50.3 (1.2) | 47.3 (1.9) | 53.0 (1.8) | 50.9 (1.3) | 48.0 (3.5) | 50.2 (2.6) |
| Governor is chief executive of state | I | 49.9 (1.5) | 54.6 (2.0) | 45.3 (1.9) | 52.8 (2.1) | 43.8 (2.6) | 36.6 (3.5) |
| Federal government does assist farmers | I | 49.5 (1.4) | 49.3 (2.1) | 49.7 (2.3) | 51.7 (2.0) | 42.1 (3.0) | 45.0 (3.9) |
| Participating in boycott is legal | P | 48.8 (1.6) | 56.2 (1.8) | 41.7 (2.2) | 48.1 (2.3) | 57.5 (2.9) | 42.7 (2.9) |
| Supreme Court declare act unconstitutional | I | 48.5 (1.6) | 48.6 (2.1) | 48.5 (1.8) | 52.7 (2.1) | 35.6 (3.1) | 40.6 (3.0) |
| Quote from Declaration | D | 46.9 (1.1) | 45.0 (1.6) | 48.7 (1.8) | 49.6 (1.4) | 36.8 (3.0) | 41.5 (3.0) |
| Organizing recall election is legal | P | 46.3 (1.1) | 49.3 (1.2) | 43.4 (1.7) | 47.4 (1.6) | 44.7 (2.4) | 41.0 (2.8) |
| Federal government not set marriage law | I | 46.3 (1.3) | 47.2 (1.8) | 45.4 (1.8) | 49.7 (1.8) | 35.4 (2.9) | 38.8 (3.3) |
| Local government not issue passports | I | 46.0 (1.2) | 48.5 (2.1) | 43.6 (2.0) | 48.2 (1.7) | 39.2 (3.1) | 40.5 (2.4) |
| Secretary of state member of Cabinet | I | 45.9 (1.6) | 43.4 (2.0) | 48.4 (1.7) | 50.2 (2.1) | 36.1 (2.5) | 37.1 (3.1) |
| Representatives are elected | P | 45.9 (1.4) | 44.4 (1.7) | 47.3 (2.0) | 48.9 (1.7) | 38.8 (3.3) | 40.5 (2.5) |
| Lobbying is legal | P | 44.2 (1.4) | 47.1 (1.8) | 41.4 (1.9) | 47.3 (1.9) | 32.7 (2.8) | 37.9 (3.0) |
| Right to religious freedom: amendments | R | 44.1 (1.2) | 39.1 (1.9) | 48.6 (1.5) | 45.8 (1.4) | 37.1 (2.9) | 40.4 (3.8) |
| Separation of powers | D | 44.0 (1.0) | 46.0 (1.6) | 42.0 (1.5) | 47.9 (1.5) | 35.0 (2.7) | 34.0 (3.2) |
| Supreme Court can rule war unconstitutional | I | 43.8 (1.4) | 46.6 (2.0) | 41.2 (1.8) | 45.8 (1.7) | 39.0 (3.2) | 38.4 (2.7) |
| Madison: informed public | D | 42.9 (1.4) | 42.4 (2.3) | 43.5 (1.5) | 46.8 (1.6) | 30.8 (2.4) | 35.1 (2.7) |
| Accused not have to testify at own trial | R | 42.8 (1.6) | 44.7 (2.0) | 41.2 (1.9) | 47.0 (1.9) | 34.0 (3.5) | 31.3 (3.2) |
| State government sets age to leave school | I | 42.2 (1.5) | 40.2 (2.1) | 44.0 (1.9) | 43.1 (1.8) | 39.7 (3.5) | 40.4 (4.8) |
| Chart shows legislative process for bill | P | 41.8 (1.1) | 40.1 (1.6) | 43.5 (1.5) | 45.0 (1.4) | 32.9 (2.8) | 30.7 (2.4) |
| Describe presidential responsibilities | I | 40.9 (1.4) | 43.3 (1.9) | 38.7 (1.8) | 44.9 (1.7) | 28.9 (3.2) | 30.9 (3.4) |
| Supreme Court decides constitutionality | I | 40.8 (1.3) | 42.3 (1.7) | 39.3 (1.8) | 42.1 (1.7) | 35.4 (2.6) | 38.3 (2.5) |
| Attorney general: Department of Justice | I | 40.5 (1.6) | 38.7 (1.9) | 42.2 (1.9) | 44.4 (2.1) | 30.1 (2.9) | 31.5 (3.6) |
| Marshall court: constitutionality of laws | D | 40.4 (1.1) | 38.0 (1.7) | 42.7 (1.8) | 42.6 (1.5) | 34.5 (2.8) | 31.5 (3.6) |
| Lobbyists known as Third House | P | 39.9 (1.7) | 42.8 (2.1) | 37.1 (1.8) | 43.5 (2.2) | 32.4 (2.5) | 30.5 (2.8) |
| *Brown v. Board of Education* | R | 39.9 (1.2) | 39.9 (1.8) | 39.9 (2.0) | 41.8 (1.4) | 37.9 (2.9) | 31.8 (3.1) |
| Three headlines on checks and balances | I | 39.8 (1.4) | 40.2 (2.0) | 39.4 (2.0) | 45.5 (1.9) | 24.2 (3.0) | 22.1 (3.0) |
| Library requires former city council support | P | 38.8 (1.2) | 38.3 (1.8) | 39.4 (1.7) | 40.9 (1.6) | 31.0 (3.0) | 36.0 (2.9) |
| President cannot appoint to Congress | I | 38.3 (1.5) | 41.9 (2.3) | 35.2 (2.0) | 38.9 (1.8) | 38.5 (3.1) | 33.4 (2.7) |
| Members of Congress make laws | I | 37.9 (1.3) | 39.3 (1.8) | 36.6 (1.7) | 39.4 (1.6) | 36.3 (3.1) | 30.5 (3.0) |
| Constitution set qualifications for Congress | I | 36.9 (1.4) | 37.6 (2.0) | 36.3 (1.8) | 39.4 (1.8) | 31.9 (2.6) | 30.8 (2.8) |
| Veto override: 2/3 vote both houses | P | 36.3 (1.5) | 38.3 (1.8) | 34.5 (1.8) | 38.1 (1.9) | 33.7 (2.4) | 26.3 (2.3) |
| Checks and balances | I | 36.3 (1.4) | 39.1 (1.9) | 33.6 (1.9) | 37.0 (1.6) | 32.5 (2.7) | 33.2 (2.1) |
| Impeaching legislators is legal | P | 36.2 (1.2) | 39.9 (1.6) | 32.7 (1.8) | 37.9 (1.4) | 32.5 (2.6) | 32.5 (2.9) |
| National convention selects pres. candidate | P | 35.9 (1.5) | 35.2 (1.9) | 36.6 (2.0) | 38.4 (2.0) | 30.0 (2.0) | 26.6 (2.6) |
| Referendum—vote on questions on ballot | P | 35.3 (1.2) | 35.9 (1.7) | 34.8 (1.4) | 36.3 (1.4) | 29.1 (2.5) | 37.9 (3.4) |
| Difference between US and USSR | D | 35.0 (1.5) | 34.7 (1.6) | 35.3 (2.0) | 37.5 (1.8) | 30.3 (3.2) | 24.0 (2.6) |
| Congress can double income tax | I | 34.0 (1.4) | 36.2 (1.7) | 31.8 (1.5) | 35.4 (1.7) | 29.2 (2.9) | 31.2 (2.4) |
| Supremacy clause | D | 33.0 (1.0) | 33.3 (1.4) | 32.7 (1.4) | 33.7 (1.4) | 34.4 (2.5) | 28.9 (3.3) |
| Federal judges approved by Senate | I | 32.5 (1.6) | 36.6 (2.3) | 28.6 (2.0) | 36.0 (2.0) | 24.6 (2.2) | 23.5 (2.3) |
| NRA activity known as lobbying | P | 31.8 (1.3) | 33.9 (1.5) | 29.9 (1.9) | 35.1 (1.6) | 23.4 (2.6) | 25.6 (2.5) |
| Local government not license lawyers | I | 31.6 (1.4) | 32.7 (2.0) | 30.5 (1.9) | 31.8 (1.8) | 29.0 (2.7) | 34.2 (3.2) |
| Effect of laws prevented from voting | R | 31.5 (1.1) | 31.5 (1.7) | 31.4 (1.3) | 33.7 (1.4) | 23.7 (2.5) | 27.7 (2.8) |
| Appeal case in higher court | R | 30.3 (1.2) | 32.2 (1.7) | 28.5 (1.6) | 33.5 (1.6) | 20.4 (2.3) | 24.9 (3.3) |
| LA Purchase: powers not granted | I | 29.9 (1.3) | 32.8 (2.1) | 27.3 (1.3) | 33.3 (1.6) | 20.3 (2.3) | 21.8 (3.5) |

*Note: The items were categorized as follows: P = Political Processes; R = Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law; D = Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government; and I = Structures and Functions of Political Institutions. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING CORRECTLY TO THE CIVICS ASSESSMENT ITEMS, 1988

### GRADE 8 (continued)

| | CATEGORY* | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senate approves Supreme Court appointments | I | 29.8 (1.2) | 30.9 (2.0) | 28.7 (1.5) | 32.6 (1.3) | 23.9 (2.7) | 23.4 (3.6) |
| Federal government helps buy homes, businesses | I | 28.9 (1.3) | 30.2 (1.8) | 27.6 (1.8) | 27.5 (1.6) | 36.3 (2.8) | 29.6 (3.2) |
| Treaty ratified by Senate | P | 27.4 (1.2) | 32.2 (1.8) | 22.8 (1.4) | 28.6 (1.6) | 23.4 (2.5) | 25.7 (4.1) |
| Amendments authorize income tax | I | 22.1 (1.1) | 24.2 (1.4) | 20.2 (1.6) | 23.3 (1.4) | 19.2 (2.8) | 20.4 (2.6) |
| Secretary of defense responds to president | I | 18.0 (1.2) | 21.3 (1.8) | 15.0 (1.4) | 19.7 (1.6) | 13.8 (2.5) | 12.3 (1.7) |
| How presidential candidate nominated | P | 18.7 (1.2) | 20.6 (1.4) | 16.9 (1.6) | 21.0 (1.5) | 11.1 (1.7) | 17.5 (2.9) |
| Department of State, international affairs | I | 18.5 (1.2) | 19.2 (1.6) | 17.9 (1.4) | 18.9 (1.4) | 17.3 (2.0) | 18.7 (2.1) |
| Average Percentage of Students Responding Correctly | | 60.5 (0.4) | 60.4 (0.5) | 60.5 (0.4) | 63.1 (0.6) | 53.9 (0.8) | 53.1 (0.7) |

*Note: The items were categorized as follows: P = Political Processes; R = Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law; D = Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government; and I = Structures and Functions of Political Institutions. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## AVERAGE PERCENT CORRECT FOR EACH CIVICS CONTENT AREA, 1988

### GRADE 8

| | | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POLITICAL PROCESSES | Average Percent Correct | 58.5 (0.5) | 58.4 (0.6) | 58.6 (0.5) | 61.3 (0.7) | 52.1 (0.9) | 50.6 (0.9) |
| | Difference | | −0.1 (0.3) | 0.1 (0.3) | 2.8 (0.3) | −6.4 (0.9) | −7.9 (0.9) |
| RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND THE LAW | Average Percent Correct | 67.0 (0.4) | 66.1 (0.5) | 67.9 (0.5) | 69.4 (0.6) | 61.6 (0.9) | 60.3 (0.8) |
| | Difference | | −0.9 (0.2) | 0.9 (0.2) | 2.4 (0.3) | −5.4 (0.9) | −6.7 (0.8) |
| DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT | Average Percent Correct | 56.5 (0.5) | 55.9 (0.6) | 57.1 (0.6) | 58.9 (0.6) | 50.2 (1.1) | 49.3 (1.0) |
| | Difference | | −0.7 (0.4) | 0.6 (0.4) | 2.4 (0.3) | −6.3 (1.1) | −7.2 (1.1) |
| STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS | Average Percent Correct | 58.5 (0.4) | 59.0 (0.6) | 58.0 (0.5) | 61.4 (0.6) | 51.1 (0.8) | 50.9 (0.8) |
| | Difference | | 0.5 (0.3) | -0.5 (0.3) | 2.9 (0.3) | −7.4 (0.8) | −7.6 (0.8) |

Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the average percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value. Note: "Difference" refers to the difference between the national and subpopulation results.

## PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING CORRECTLY TO THE CIVICS ASSESSMENT ITEMS, 1988

### GRADE 12

| | CATEGORY* | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Right to lawyer | R | 97.6 (0.4) | 96.0 (0.7) | 99.0 (0.4) | 98.4 (0.4) | 96.8 (1.1) | 91.8 (2.7) |
| Right to know what accused of | R | 96.6 (0.6) | 95.3 (1.1) | 97.8 (0.5) | 97.2 (0.6) | 95.1 (1.5) | 92.1 (3.0) |
| Picking neighbors not constitutional right | R | 95.9 (0.4) | 94.7 (0.8) | 96.9 (0.5) | 97.1 (0.5) | 92.8 (1.7) | 89.4 (2.6) |
| Refusing to obey laws is illegal | P | 95.2 (0.5) | 93.8 (0.8) | 96.5 (0.6) | 96.4 (0.6) | 92.0 (1.6) | 88.6 (2.8) |
| Right to remain silent | R | 94.2 (0.7) | 93.1 (1.1) | 95.2 (0.8) | 95.9 (0.7) | 87.6 (2.0) | 86.7 (2.9) |
| Refusing to pay taxes is illegal | P | 94.2 (0.6) | 92.0 (1.0) | 96.3 (0.6) | 95.6 (0.6) | 89.6 (1.9) | 88.7 (2.2) |
| Presidential term | I | 94.0 (0.6) | 93.7 (1.0) | 94.3 (0.8) | 95.0 (0.7) | 90.8 (2.3) | 90.7 (2.2) |
| Name president | I | 93.7 (0.7) | 91.3 (1.3) | 95.9 (0.7) | 94.4 (0.8) | 90.8 (2.1) | 92.9 (1.8) |
| State governors usually elected | P | 93.3 (0.6) | 94.5 (0.9) | 92.2 (0.8) | 94.8 (0.6) | 88.6 (2.4) | 89.9 (2.8) |
| First 10 amendments | R | 92.5 (0.7) | 91.3 (1.0) | 93.6 (0.9) | 93.6 (0.8) | 91.1 (1.9) | 86.2 (2.4) |
| Voting age is 18 | R | 92.4 (0.8) | 88.3 (1.6) | 96.1 (0.6) | 93.4 (0.9) | 90.1 (2.0) | 86.4 (3.5) |
| No right to go free | R | 91.7 (0.9) | 92.3 (1.1) | 91.2 (1.4) | 93.5 (0.9) | 84.5 (2.9) | 86.5 (3.3) |
| Poll tax not required to vote | R | 91.3 (0.8) | 90.2 (1.1) | 92.3 (1.2) | 93.4 (0.7) | 86.9 (2.5) | 82.4 (3.0) |
| Presenting views to media is legal | P | 91.1 (0.9) | 90.4 (1.2) | 91.8 (1.0) | 92.6 (0.9) | 85.3 (3.1) | 86.2 (3.4) |
| Writing protest letters is legal | P | 90.7 (0.9) | 91.1 (1.1) | 90.4 (1.1) | 92.2 (0.9) | 83.1 (2.9) | 89.1 (1.9) |
| Constitutional rights, individual freedoms | D | 90.7 (0.8) | 88.3 (1.0) | 93.0 (0.9) | 92.6 (0.8) | 84.0 (2.5) | 83.7 (3.0) |
| Right to counsel | R | 90.5 (0.6) | 89.2 (0.9) | 91.6 (0.9) | 91.5 (0.7) | 89.3 (2.1) | 83.5 (2.7) |
| State government regulates auto licensing | I | 90.3 (0.8) | 89.7 (1.3) | 90.8 (1.1) | 92.5 (0.8) | 83.2 (3.2) | 82.5 (2.8) |
| Federal government makes treaties | I | 92.3 (0.8) | 92.8 (1.1) | 91.8 (1.0) | 95.3 (0.7) | 84.1 (2.3) | 81.7 (3.0) |
| US courts can decide sex discrimination | I | 89.3 (1.1) | 89.6 (1.2) | 89.0 (1.6) | 91.2 (1.2) | 84.1 (2.2) | 79.8 (3.4) |
| Accused cannot go to jail without proof | R | 89.7 (1.0) | 89.2 (1.5) | 90.1 (1.1) | 91.2 (1.2) | 84.8 (2.6) | 85.9 (3.1) |
| Two candidates provide choice | D | 88.7 (0.9) | 87.3 (1.4) | 90.1 (1.1) | 91.2 (0.9) | 80.4 (2.8) | 79.9 (3.1) |
| Bill must pass House and Senate | P | 87.7 (1.1) | 83.9 (1.5) | 91.4 (1.2) | 88.8 (1.2) | 81.2 (2.7) | 87.3 (3.1) |
| Duty of jury is to determine if guilty | I | 87.2 (1.2) | 86.4 (1.5) | 87.9 (1.4) | 89.5 (1.3) | 78.9 (3.2) | 77.8 (3.3) |
| National government prints money | I | 86.9 (0.9) | 90.5 (1.0) | 83.7 (1.8) | 89.8 (1.1) | 70.3 (3.4) | 83.0 (3.3) |
| Citizens cannot refuse to pay taxes | P | 85.6 (0.9) | 83.7 (1.2) | 87.5 (1.1) | 88.7 (0.9) | 70.8 (3.4) | 81.7 (2.9) |
| Congress cannot restrict freedom of press | D | 85.0 (0.9) | 85.0 (1.5) | 84.9 (1.4) | 87.7 (1.0) | 74.7 (2.8) | 74.6 (3.0) |
| Federal government regulates international trade | I | 84.9 (1.1) | 84.8 (1.6) | 85.0 (1.3) | 87.7 (1.1) | 74.5 (2.4) | 77.3 (3.3) |
| US courts can decide if idea taken | I | 84.0 (0.9) | 84.9 (1.3) | 83.0 (1.2) | 87.6 (0.9) | 74.6 (3.0) | 68.0 (4.5) |
| Police do nothing unless law is broken | R | 83.8 (1.0) | 82.8 (1.6) | 84.6 (1.1) | 85.5 (1.1) | 78.5 (2.8) | 78.4 (3.8) |
| Lobbying is legal way to change law | P | 83.4 (0.9) | 84.4 (1.5) | 82.4 (1.4) | 86.9 (1.0) | 71.2 (3.5) | 69.9 (3.8) |
| Federal government does not ensure jobs | I | 82.9 (0.9) | 83.6 (1.1) | 82.2 (1.5) | 86.6 (1.0) | 66.9 (2.7) | 73.8 (3.8) |
| Federal government regulates food, drugs | I | 82.3 (0.9) | 85.2 (1.4) | 79.7 (1.3) | 86.2 (1.1) | 65.3 (3.1) | 70.5 (4.0) |
| Congress cannot establish national church | D | 82.3 (1.1) | 85.0 (1.6) | 79.8 (1.2) | 84.4 (1.4) | 69.1 (2.9) | 84.3 (2.8) |
| National defense not local | I | 82.0 (1.2) | 80.7 (1.8) | 83.4 (1.3) | 83.8 (1.5) | 73.3 (3.6) | 75.5 (2.7) |
| Treason—make war or give aid to enemy | R | 81.5 (1.0) | 83.9 (1.5) | 79.0 (1.3) | 85.0 (1.2) | 66.6 (2.8) | 72.7 (3.5) |
| County is highest level of local government | I | 81.3 (1.1) | 83.5 (1.4) | 79.3 (1.6) | 83.4 (1.2) | 72.2 (2.8) | 73.7 (4.2) |
| Local government not regulate military | I | 80.9 (1.2) | 82.4 (1.8) | 79.5 (1.5) | 83.8 (1.3) | 65.8 (3.2) | 78.9 (3.1) |
| Constitution: basis for Supreme Court cases | I | 80.5 (1.3) | 77.7 (1.9) | 83.1 (1.4) | 83.8 (1.4) | 66.1 (3.4) | 75.3 (3.8) |
| 1954 ruling: courts protect citizen rights | R | 79.7 (1.4) | 78.2 (1.8) | 81.2 (1.4) | 82.0 (1.5) | 69.8 (3.7) | 72.6 (3.2) |
| Civil rights in Constitution | R | 79.2 (1.0) | 78.0 (1.3) | 80.3 (1.6) | 81.5 (1.1) | 69.5 (3.4) | 70.7 (2.8) |
| Innocent until proven guilty | R | 79.1 (1.0) | 81.3 (1.3) | 76.8 (1.4) | 81.4 (1.1) | 66.2 (3.3) | 77.2 (3.2) |
| US courts cannot declare war | I | 78.2 (1.0) | 80.0 (1.5) | 76.4 (1.5) | 79.3 (1.3) | 72.8 (3.0) | 72.8 (2.9) |
| Community must weigh pros and cons | P | 77.6 (1.0) | 76.0 (1.8) | 79.2 (1.5) | 79.9 (1.2) | 63.9 (3.0) | 76.6 (3.3) |
| Freedom of speech: not protect "Fire" | R | 76.9 (1.2) | 79.3 (1.9) | 74.7 (1.7) | 79.4 (1.3) | 66.8 (3.4) | 71.4 (3.6) |
| Senator is elected by voters | D | 76.8 (1.1) | 79.5 (1.8) | 74.4 (1.5) | 80.0 (1.3) | 60.6 (2.8) | 68.9 (4.3) |
| Congress consists of House and Senate | I | 76.5 (1.3) | 77.7 (1.9) | 75.4 (1.8) | 78.2 (1.5) | 68.7 (2.8) | 70.7 (3.5) |
| Activities of parties not constitutionally defined | I | 76.5 (1.2) | 76.6 (1.6) | 76.5 (1.9) | 80.4 (1.4) | 62.0 (3.8) | 59.9 (4.4) |
| Both groups allowed to speak | R | 76.1 (1.3) | 74.5 (2.1) | 77.6 (1.2) | 79.1 (1.6) | 68.2 (3.0) | 60.4 (4.4) |
| Suing in court is legal | P | 75.9 (1.2) | 76.2 (1.8) | 75.5 (1.5) | 78.0 (1.3) | 74.0 (2.4) | 62.5 (4.1) |
| U.S. senator is elected | P | 75.1 (1.5) | 78.1 (1.9) | 72.3 (1.9) | 78.6 (1.6) | 59.7 (3.1) | 66.9 (4.3) |
| Congress is legislative branch | I | 75.0 (1.4) | 76.7 (1.8) | 73.5 (1.8) | 78.2 (1.6) | 64.9 (3.0) | 63.5 (4.1) |
| Fifth amendment | R | 74.7 (1.0) | 78.5 (1.4) | 71.2 (1.6) | 77.6 (1.1) | 71.1 (2.6) | 62.8 (3.6) |
| Lobbying is legal | P | 74.0 (1.6) | 76.8 (1.8) | 71.2 (2.1) | 78.1 (1.7) | 54.6 (3.2) | 64.8 (4.5) |
| President is executive branch | I | 73.9 (1.4) | 74.4 (1.9) | 73.5 (1.8) | 76.8 (1.4) | 61.5 (4.0) | 65.8 (4.1) |
| Party chooses candidate in primary | P | 73.5 (1.5) | 74.4 (1.9) | 72.8 (2.0) | 75.5 (1.6) | 64.4 (3.4) | 67.4 (4.0) |
| Constitution divides state, nation powers | D | 73.1 (1.3) | 74.5 (1.6) | 71.9 (1.6) | 76.1 (1.6) | 63.2 (2.8) | 64.5 (3.9) |
| Speaker of House | I | 72.9 (1.3) | 75.3 (1.7) | 70.6 (1.6) | 74.8 (1.4) | 67.5 (2.6) | 66.1 (3.1) |
| Local government operates public schools | I | 72.8 (1.2) | 71.8 (1.7) | 73.8 (1.7) | 74.0 (1.4) | 65.5 (3.2) | 72.5 (3.6) |
| Federal government assists farmers | I | 72.8 (1.1) | 77.5 (1.8) | 68.5 (1.4) | 75.8 (1.2) | 60.5 (3.3) | 66.1 (3.4) |
| Conflict between order, freedom of speech | R | 72.6 (1.4) | 69.6 (2.1) | 75.4 (1.2) | 73.5 (1.5) | 69.1 (3.4) | 67.3 (3.7) |
| Miranda ruling | R | 72.5 (1.3) | 70.2 (2.0) | 74.8 (1.7) | 75.2 (1.5) | 64.8 (3.6) | 61.3 (4.5) |
| Landlord may bring lawsuit against tenant | R | 72.3 (1.1) | 66.2 (1.7) | 78.3 (1.6) | 73.2 (1.3) | 74.7 (2.4) | 63.1 (4.4) |
| Declaration of war approved by Congress | I | 71.4 (1.3) | 77.3 (1.9) | 66.0 (2.0) | 74.4 (1.4) | 58.8 (3.4) | 64.9 (3.4) |
| Supreme Court is judicial branch | I | 71.4 (1.4) | 73.8 (2.1) | 69.1 (1.6) | 73.7 (1.6) | 56.5 (3.2) | 67.8 (3.4) |
| Governor is chief executive of state | I | 70.7 (1.3) | 73.1 (1.9) | 68.6 (1.8) | 74.2 (1.4) | 56.4 (3.2) | 65.0 (4.0) |
| Most likely to vote | P | 70.5 (1.0) | 65.8 (1.5) | 74.8 (1.7) | 71.3 (1.4) | 67.5 (2.8) | 70.2 (3.6) |
| Bill goes to committee of House | P | 69.7 (1.3) | 67.2 (1.6) | 72.1 (1.6) | 73.7 (1.4) | 55.4 (3.0) | 57.0 (3.8) |
| Madison: informed public | D | 68.6 (1.3) | 67.6 (2.0) | 69.5 (1.6) | 71.3 (1.6) | 54.8 (3.5) | 64.7 (4.4) |
| Supreme Court: act unconstitutional | I | 68.4 (1.6) | 70.9 (2.3) | 66.1 (1.8) | 70.8 (1.9) | 56.6 (4.3) | 55.1 (5.4) |
| *Brown v. Board of Education* | R | 68.1 (1.3) | 67.4 (1.9) | 68.7 (1.6) | 69.8 (1.5) | 64.0 (3.3) | 60.0 (3.6) |

*Note: The items were categorized as follows: P = Political Processes; R = Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law; D = Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government; and I = Structures and Functions of Political Institutions. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING CORRECTLY TO THE CIVICS ASSESSMENT ITEMS, 1988

### GRADE 12 (continued)

| | CATEGORY* | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Three headlines on checks and balances | I | 67.9 (1.5) | 70.0 (2.0) | 65.8 (1.4) | 71.9 (1.6) | 49.4 (3.9) | 53.7 (4.4) |
| Headline: judicial powers | I | 67.5 (1.1) | 69.3 (1.7) | 65.7 (1.6) | 69.5 (1.2) | 57.8 (3.6) | 60.9 (3.2) |
| Appeal case in higher court | R | 66.5 (1.2) | 71.4 (1.7) | 61.9 (1.8) | 71.1 (1.4) | 47.9 (3.5) | 50.4 (4.2) |
| Lobbyists known as Third House | P | 66.3 (1.4) | 70.4 (2.2) | 62.5 (1.6) | 70.6 (1.5) | 46.1 (3.9) | 57.5 (3.9) |
| Federal government does not set marriage law | I | 66.1 (1.5) | 68.8 (1.9) | 63.7 (1.5) | 69.9 (1.6) | 50.4 (3.6) | 57.7 (4.0) |
| Supreme Court can declare war unconstitutional | I | 66.0 (1.0) | 68.9 (1.4) | 63.3 (1.6) | 68.7 (1.1) | 57.3 (3.0) | 56.8 (4.2) |
| Separation of powers | D | 65.6 (1.2) | 67.7 (1.9) | 63.6 (1.6) | 68.8 (1.3) | 50.5 (3.7) | 58.3 (4.0) |
| Chief justice is appointed, approved | I | 65.9 (1.4) | 65.9 (1.9) | 66.0 (1.8) | 68.3 (1.6) | 56.4 (3.7) | 61.2 (3.8) |
| US has representative democracy | D | 64.2 (1.5) | 67.8 (2.4) | 61.0 (2.0) | 66.6 (1.7) | 53.3 (3.1) | 53.5 (4.7) |
| 1st amendment grants freedom of religion | R | 64.0 (1.7) | 64.4 (2.0) | 63.7 (2.2) | 66.9 (1.9) | 55.4 (3.6) | 51.8 (4.4) |
| Hunger strike is legal | P | 63.9 (1.3) | 64.6 (1.4) | 63.3 (1.8) | 65.5 (1.6) | 62.1 (3.8) | 50.3 (3.8) |
| Voting age in most recent amendment | R | 63.8 (1.5) | 62.9 (2.3) | 64.6 (2.1) | 63.9 (1.8) | 65.5 (3.7) | 53.3 (3.4) |
| Criticism of electoral college system | P | 63.2 (1.7) | 65.4 (1.9) | 61.1 (1.9) | 66.9 (2.0) | 51.0 (4.3) | 48.9 (4.5) |
| Chart shows legislative process for bill | P | 63.0 (1.1) | 63.7 (1.7) | 62.4 (1.6) | 66.8 (1.4) | 45.9 (3.6) | 50.0 (3.2) |
| Attorney general: Department of Justice | I | 62.7 (1.7) | 62.7 (2.5) | 62.6 (1.8) | 65.5 (2.0) | 52.5 (3.2) | 50.2 (4.9) |
| No. representatives varies by state population | I | 62.3 (1.4) | 65.5 (2.1) | 59.3 (2.0) | 66.7 (1.6) | 42.5 (3.4) | 53.1 (5.2) |
| Participating in boycott is legal | P | 62.1 (1.5) | 69.4 (1.9) | 55.1 (2.1) | 61.7 (1.9) | 71.5 (2.8) | 49.4 (3.8) |
| Main purpose of UN | I | 61.9 (1.4) | 60.0 (1.9) | 63.6 (2.0) | 64.0 (1.7) | 48.9 (4.3) | 58.9 (3.9) |
| Organizing recall election is legal | P | 61.7 (1.6) | 67.5 (1.6) | 56.0 (2.6) | 63.1 (1.8) | 57.2 (2.6) | 58.5 (4.7) |
| Each state has 2 senators | I | 61.6 (1.3) | 65.4 (2.0) | 58.0 (1.5) | 64.8 (1.4) | 44.3 (3.4) | 55.1 (5.2) |
| NRA activity known as lobbying | P | 61.1 (1.5) | 63.6 (2.0) | 58.8 (2.0) | 66.6 (1.6) | 40.8 (4.0) | 40.7 (3.7) |
| Difference between US and USSR | D | 60.8 (1.4) | 63.2 (2.0) | 58.4 (1.9) | 62.7 (1.7) | 45.2 (2.8) | 60.9 (4.5) |
| Describe presidential responsibilities | I | 58.2 (1.7) | 56.7 (2.2) | 59.6 (2.3) | 62.0 (2.1) | 39.8 (3.5) | 51.7 (4.8) |
| US has more than 2 political parties | I | 58.2 (1.3) | 62.0 (2.0) | 54.7 (1.6) | 62.4 (1.5) | 42.3 (2.8) | 47.2 (3.5) |
| Local government does not issue passports | I | 57.6 (1.6) | 65.2 (2.0) | 50.7 (2.0) | 59.1 (1.8) | 50.2 (3.0) | 47.6 (3.1) |
| Laws prevented some from voting | R | 57.5 (1.7) | 59.7 (1.9) | 55.4 (2.2) | 60.1 (1.8) | 44.7 (3.1) | 50.9 (3.6) |
| Secretary of state member of Cabinet | I | 57.5 (1.7) | 56.9 (2.5) | 58.0 (1.8) | 58.9 (2.0) | 53.3 (3.5) | 48.8 (4.2) |
| Declaration: Right to life, liberty, etc. | R | 57.3 (1.6) | 57.2 (2.1) | 57.3 (2.5) | 59.7 (1.9) | 43.7 (3.5) | 57.0 (3.7) |
| National convention selects pres. candidate | P | 56.9 (1.2) | 61.0 (1.8) | 53.1 (1.6) | 59.5 (1.4) | 40.4 (3.2) | 49.5 (4.5) |
| Quote from Declaration | D | 56.5 (1.4) | 55.3 (2.4) | 57.7 (1.7) | 58.1 (1.6) | 50.3 (3.5) | 45.4 (4.1) |
| Supreme Court least influenced by lobby | P | 56.4 (1.2) | 60.5 (1.6) | 52.6 (1.9) | 60.0 (1.5) | 42.2 (3.5) | 42.7 (4.1) |
| Income tax gives federal government most income | I | 55.9 (1.5) | 57.6 (2.1) | 54.4 (2.3) | 58.7 (1.7) | 42.8 (4.0) | 48.1 (3.3) |
| Checks and balances | D | 54.9 (1.4) | 56.6 (2.1) | 53.3 (1.9) | 56.7 (1.7) | 44.8 (2.3) | 49.6 (5.9) |
| Impeaching legislators is legal | P | 54.8 (1.4) | 61.1 (1.7) | 48.6 (2.0) | 55.5 (1.7) | 54.8 (3.1) | 50.6 (3.6) |
| Definition of judicial review | D | 54.6 (1.3) | 55.9 (1.8) | 53.4 (2.0) | 56.2 (1.6) | 44.0 (3.6) | 52.9 (4.8) |
| Interstate highways | P | 54.4 (1.4) | 58.1 (1.7) | 51.1 (2.1) | 57.0 (1.6) | 43.8 (3.1) | 47.3 (4.3) |
| Marshall court: constitutionality of laws | D | 54.4 (1.4) | 55.9 (2.2) | 52.9 (1.7) | 56.8 (1.8) | 44.7 (3.2) | 45.7 (3.0) |
| Senate approves Supreme Court appointments | I | 54.2 (1.4) | 57.1 (2.1) | 51.4 (1.8) | 58.2 (1.5) | 40.0 (3.4) | 39.3 (3.6) |
| Veto override: 2/3 vote both houses | P | 53.7 (1.4) | 55.0 (1.9) | 52.3 (1.7) | 54.9 (1.6) | 47.1 (4.1) | 53.3 (3.5) |
| State assembly is in legislative branch | I | 52.2 (1.6) | 57.1 (1.9) | 47.6 (2.3) | 54.9 (1.9) | 41.5 (3.7) | 44.1 (3.4) |
| Right to religious freedom in amendments | R | 51.3 (1.7) | 48.0 (1.9) | 54.6 (2.2) | 51.7 (2.1) | 51.8 (3.6) | 47.9 (3.6) |
| Federal judges approved by Senate | I | 51.3 (1.4) | 57.3 (1.8) | 45.7 (1.8) | 53.6 (1.5) | 42.2 (3.6) | 35.7 (4.1) |
| Referendum—vote on questions on ballot | P | 50.1 (1.7) | 51.7 (2.2) | 48.5 (2.2) | 52.4 (1.9) | 37.5 (3.7) | 46.0 (3.6) |
| Governor is executive branch | I | 49.9 (1.7) | 56.5 (2.0) | 43.8 (2.1) | 51.7 (2.0) | 38.8 (3.4) | 46.4 (4.5) |
| Power to tax belongs to Congress | I | 49.6 (1.3) | 53.3 (1.9) | 46.2 (1.6) | 53.4 (1.5) | 37.6 (3.8) | 35.4 (4.8) |
| Best question for opinion poll | P | 48.6 (1.5) | 49.7 (2.0) | 47.6 (2.0) | 53.0 (1.8) | 28.4 (2.7) | 38.8 (4.2) |
| LA Purchase: powers not granted | I | 48.1 (1.5) | 50.8 (2.0) | 45.5 (2.0) | 50.5 (1.6) | 38.4 (3.8) | 40.3 (3.4) |
| Courts settle disputes | I | 47.0 (1.5) | 52.3 (2.2) | 42.0 (1.8) | 50.5 (1.7) | 31.8 (3.6) | 35.1 (3.7) |
| Ban on double jeopardy | D | 46.5 (1.8) | 52.0 (2.4) | 41.5 (2.0) | 51.2 (1.9) | 26.0 (3.2) | 32.4 (3.9) |
| Cabinet is executive branch | I | 45.7 (1.3) | 51.0 (2.2) | 40.7 (1.7) | 47.4 (1.7) | 38.4 (2.9) | 38.9 (3.3) |
| Constitution sets qualifications for Congress | I | 45.3 (1.5) | 47.1 (2.4) | 43.6 (1.7) | 48.1 (1.8) | 35.5 (2.9) | 35.9 (4.5) |
| Treaty ratified by Senate | P | 45.3 (1.3) | 48.2 (2.2) | 42.7 (1.6) | 47.2 (1.6) | 33.4 (3.5) | 37.8 (4.2) |
| Citizens remove official by recall election | P | 45.2 (1.7) | 46.5 (2.0) | 43.9 (2.1) | 47.4 (2.1) | 34.6 (3.1) | 36.2 (4.2) |
| Chart shows steps to become president | P | 44.7 (1.3) | 46.4 (2.0) | 43.2 (1.6) | 49.6 (1.4) | 28.0 (3.3) | 25.3 (3.9) |
| Supremacy clause | D | 44.4 (1.3) | 48.1 (2.0) | 40.6 (1.7) | 46.8 (1.5) | 39.1 (3.1) | 35.6 (4.0) |
| Who votes in closed primary | P | 44.3 (1.5) | 46.1 (1.8) | 42.7 (2.4) | 46.1 (1.8) | 37.5 (3.1) | 40.0 (3.7) |
| State with more senators than reps. | I | 42.8 (1.4) | 45.7 (1.8) | 40.0 (2.0) | 46.1 (1.5) | 30.6 (2.8) | 31.9 (3.1) |
| Method to replace vice-president | P | 41.4 (1.4) | 40.5 (1.9) | 42.2 (1.8) | 43.5 (1.6) | 31.8 (3.0) | 33.0 (3.0) |
| Procedures for presidential nomination | P | 39.2 (1.3) | 40.9 (1.9) | 37.6 (1.5) | 40.6 (1.6) | 34.9 (3.0) | 36.3 (3.4) |
| Local government does not license lawyers | I | 38.9 (1.6) | 40.4 (2.2) | 37.4 (2.1) | 39.9 (1.8) | 31.8 (3.6) | 39.5 (3.4) |
| Congress can double income tax | I | 38.7 (1.4) | 41.8 (2.1) | 35.8 (1.8) | 40.5 (1.6) | 33.2 (3.2) | 28.4 (3.7) |
| How presidential candidate nominated | P | 38.2 (1.6) | 44.5 (2.0) | 32.0 (1.9) | 40.1 (1.6) | 29.5 (3.3) | 28.6 (3.4) |
| Senator's term is 6 years | I | 36.7 (1.4) | 40.0 (2.1) | 33.7 (1.7) | 37.4 (1.8) | 33.6 (3.2) | 31.6 (3.4) |
| Definition of bicameralism | D | 36.7 (1.6) | 35.0 (2.0) | 38.2 (2.0) | 38.3 (1.7) | 27.4 (3.4) | 31.9 (4.2) |
| President: House impeach, Senate convict | D | 35.9 (1.5) | 38.3 (2.1) | 33.7 (1.6) | 37.7 (1.8) | 28.3 (2.7) | 29.5 (3.7) |
| Department of State: foreign affairs | I | 35.6 (1.7) | 40.2 (2.5) | 31.5 (1.8) | 37.5 (2.0) | 25.3 (3.5) | 30.4 (3.0) |
| PACs raise money | P | 35.2 (1.4) | 34.4 (1.7) | 36.0 (2.1) | 35.6 (1.7) | 33.5 (3.4) | 30.8 (3.9) |
| Federal government helps buy homes, businesses | I | 34.6 (1.2) | 38.4 (1.8) | 31.2 (1.9) | 35.1 (1.4) | 39.9 (3.2) | 28.9 (3.2) |
| Amendments authorize income tax | I | 33.1 (1.1) | 36.9 (1.6) | 29.4 (1.6) | 36.2 (1.3) | 21.0 (2.9) | 19.9 (2.8) |
| Candidate gets 100% electoral votes | I | 28.8 (1.3) | 33.8 (1.7) | 24.1 (1.8) | 32.0 (1.4) | 16.5 (2.6) | 15.2 (2.4) |

*Note: The items were categorized as follows: P = Political Processes; R = Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law; D = Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government; and I = Structures and Functions of Political Institutions. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

## PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING CORRECTLY TO THE CIVICS ASSESSMENT ITEMS, 1988

### GRADE 12 (continued)

| | CATEGORY* | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theory of social contract | D | 27.7 (1.4) | 31.9 (2.1) | 23.9 (1.4) | 28.7 (1.8) | 24.7 (2.6) | 28.3 (3.7) |
| County sheriff is in executive branch | I | 27.1 (1.3) | 28.5 (1.5) | 25.9 (1.7) | 28.5 (1.5) | 21.4 (2.9) | 22.7 (3.3) |
| Supreme Court: majority strikes down laws | I | 14.5 (1.0) | 19.4 (1.7) | 10.0 (1.2) | 15.3 (1.2) | 10.2 (1.9) | 8.8 (2.3) |
| Average Percentage of Students Responding Correctly | | 66.5 (0.5) | 67.8 (0.8) | 65.3 (0.5) | 68.9 (0.5) | 57.1 (1.0) | 58.9 (1.2) |

*Note: The items were categorized as follows: P = Political Processes; R = Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law; D = Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government; and I = Structures and Functions of Political Institutions. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

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## AVERAGE PERCENT CORRECT FOR EACH CIVICS CONTENT AREA, 1988

### GRADE 12

| | | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | WHITE | BLACK | HISPANIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POLITICAL PROCESSES | Average Percent Correct | 64.5 (0.5) | 65.9 (0.8) | 63.2 (0.5) | 66.9 (0.6) | 55.0 (1.0) | 56.7 (1.2) |
| | Difference | | 1.4 (0.4) | −1.3 (0.3) | 2.4 (0.3) | −9.6 (1.0) | −7.8 (1.1) |
| RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND THE LAW | Average Percent Correct | 78.9 (0.5) | 78.3 (0.8) | 79.4 (0.4) | 80.8 (0.5) | 72.8 (1.1) | 71.4 (1.2) |
| | Difference | | −0.6 (0.4) | 0.5 (0.4) | 1.9 (0.2) | −6.1 (1.0) | −7.5 (1.1) |
| DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT | Average Percent Correct | 61.4 (0.6) | 62.9 (0.9) | 60.1 (0.5) | 63.8 (0.6) | 50.8 (1.2) | 55.0 (1.6) |
| | Difference | | 1.4 (0.5) | −1.3 (0.4) | 2.3 (0.3) | −10.6 (1.1) | −6.5 (1.5) |
| STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS | Average Percent Correct | 63.6 (0.6) | 65.7 (0.9) | 61.6 (0.6) | 66.1 (0.6) | 53.1 (1.1) | 55.6 (1.3) |
| | Difference | | 2.1 (0.4) | −2.0 (0.4) | 2.5 (0.2) | −10.5 (1.0) | −8.0 (1.1) |

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Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the average percentage of students responding correctly is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value. Note: "Difference" refers to the difference between the national and subpopulation results.

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